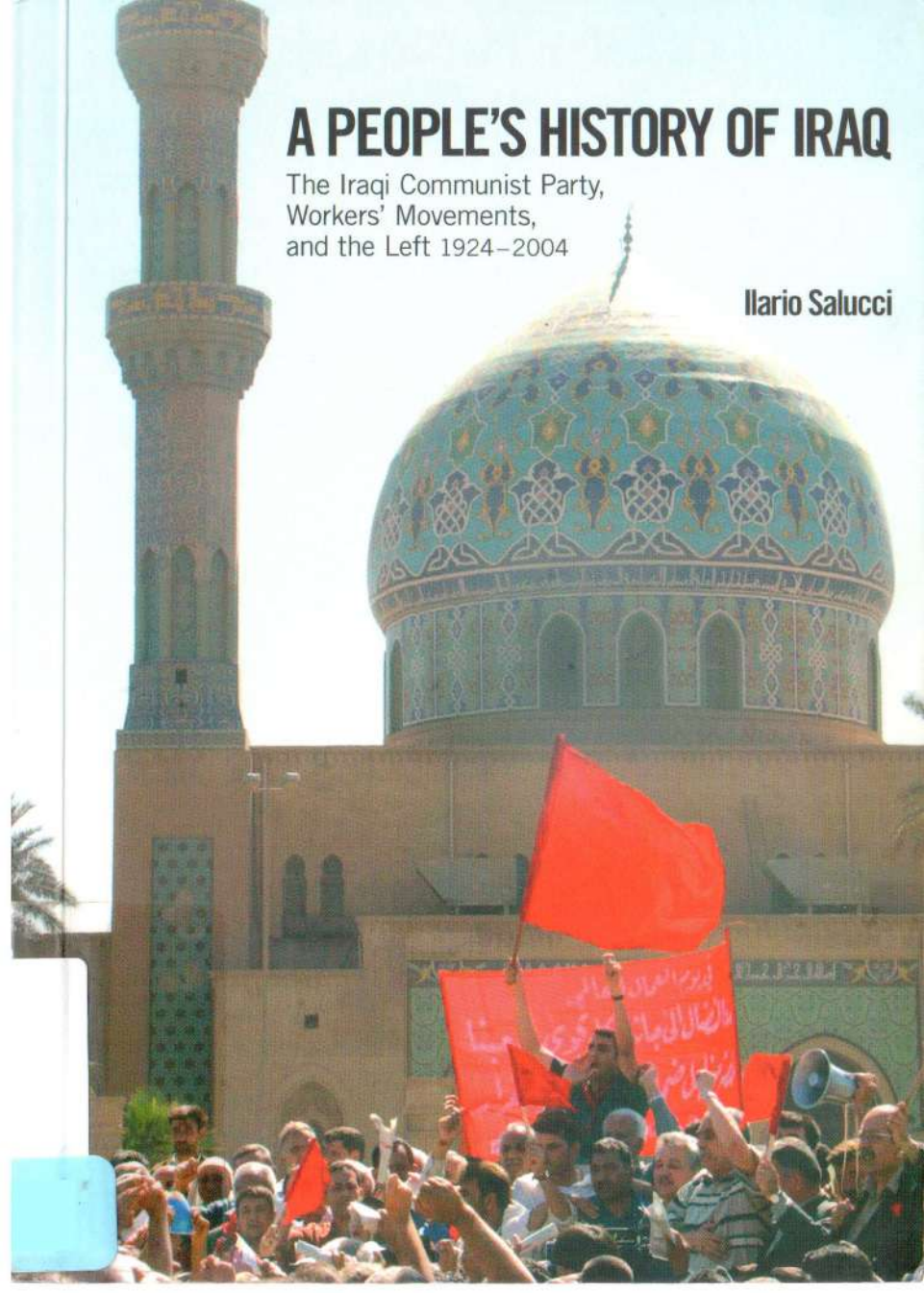


A PEOPLE'S HISTORY OF IRAQ

The Iraqi Communist Party,
Workers' Movements,
and the Left 1924–2004

Ilario Salucci



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and the Left 1924-2004

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A People's History of Israel

A People's History of Iraq

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Workers' Movements,
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Chicago, Illinois

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P.O. Box 180165, Chicago, IL 60618
www.haymarketbooks.org

Originally published as *al-Wathbah (Il salto): Movimento comunista e lotta di classe in Iraq* in Italy by Colibri-Giovane Talpain, 2003.

Cover design by Eric Ruder
Cover photo of Iraqi Communist Party march on May Day 2003.
Photo courtesy AFP.

ISBN-10: 1-931859-14-0
ISBN-13: 978-1-931859-14-1

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1
Printed in Canada.



Library of Congress Cataloging-in-publication data
Salucci, Ilario.

[Wathbah. English]

A people's history of Iraq : Workers' movements and the Left,
1924-2004 / Ilario Salucci.

p. cm.

"Originally published as *al-Wathbah (Il Salto) : movimento comunisata e lotta di classe in Iraq (1924-2003)*"

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 1-931859-14-0 (pbk.)

1. ò Hizb al-Shuy     al-'Ir      —History. 2. Communist parties—Iraq—History. 3. Labor movement—Iraq—History. I. Title.

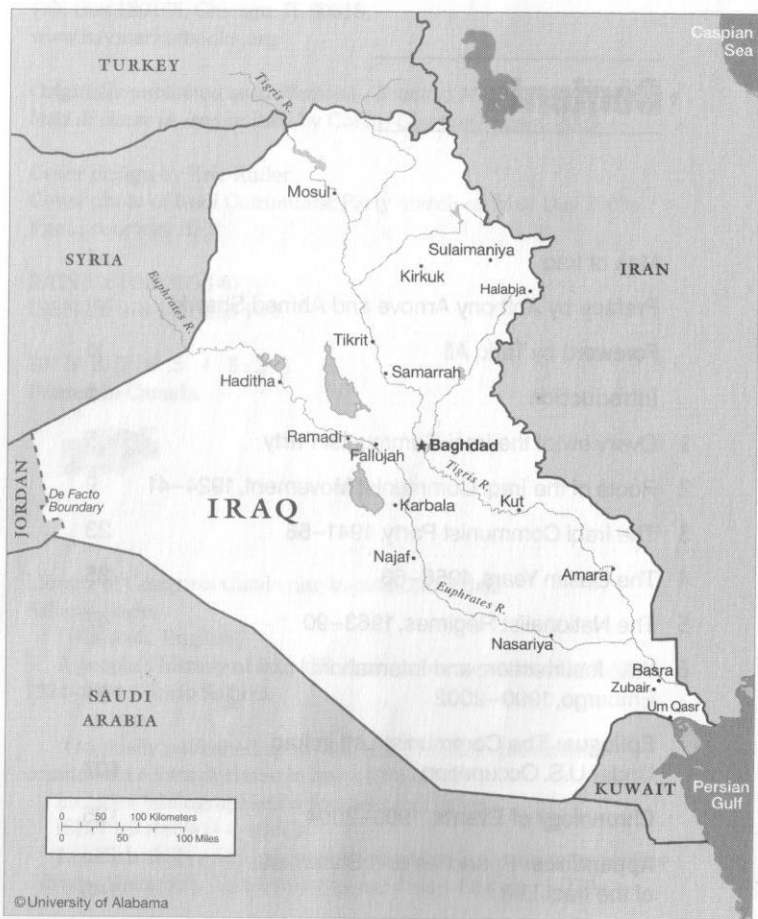
JQ1849.A98S49613 2005

* 324.2567'075—dc22

2004024314

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Preface

The U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq will continue to shape geopolitics for years, perhaps decades to come. Though, as it happens, events there have not unfolded according to the “best laid plans” of the Bush administration. George W. Bush and his neocon advisers, believing the lies of exile Iraqis and drunk with their own power, expected to be greeted in Iraq with “sweets and flowers” and to quickly and easily remake Iraq in their own image. In fact, they have been met with immense resistance, from wide swaths of Iraqi society, not just “Baathist remnants,” “dead enders,” “terrorists,” and “foreign fighters.” Had the war’s planners bothered to pay attention to history—particularly the history Ilario Salucci describes in this book—they might have taken into account the resistance to British efforts to “liberate” Iraq in the early twentieth century. And they might have considered the fact that few Iraqis forgot who was responsible for keeping Saddam Hussein in power at the end of the 1991 Gulf War, when the U.S. consciously chose to keep the Iraqi dicta-

tor in place rather than allow a Shiite uprising to topple him. Nor did they forget the pain and suffering of the thirteen years of United Nations sanctions, backed primarily by the United States and United Kingdom, which claimed more than 500,000 Iraqi lives, most of them children. Nor did they forget the periodic bombing of their country by U.S. planes taking off from air bases in Turkey.

Though Washington, in the face of popular opposition to occupation, is now in many respects losing the war in Iraq, it is important to remember the stakes for the U.S. government in being able to declare victory. Not only did the Bush administration make outrageous claims for what the invasion would achieve in Iraq (democracy, human rights, a thriving economy), it said it could achieve these aims at little or no cost to the United States. Washington said it could pay for the occupation with Iraqi oil, rather than the hundreds of billions of dollars now being taken from social programs to fund the operation, and said it would require little commitment of troops. But today, soldiers are being called up from reserve in greater numbers and being forced to stay longer and longer, in dangerous conditions under which now more than 1,400 have been killed. The U.S. government also claimed the invasion would remake the image of the entire Middle East, and beyond the Middle East, the whole of world politics.

The key motivation for invading Iraq, however, was not democracy, but oil. Iraq has the world's second largest proven oil reserves. It sits in a region with two-thirds of global oil reserves. Oil is a vital component of the world capitalist system,

and is becoming even more vital as it grows more scarce and as the leading economic, political, and military competitors to the United States in Europe and Asia (particularly China and India) grow more reliant on importing Middle East oil resources to fuel their expanding economies. Hence the decades-old commitment of Washington to controlling Middle East oil resources as a lever for exerting hegemony globally has become even stronger. For the U.S. empire, then, Iraq is far more strategically important than was Vietnam.

Our goal in translating and publishing the present volume is to better acquaint English-speaking readers with modern Iraqi history, a history that the media in the U.S. has completely ignored or misrepresented. Racist images of Arabs in general and Iraqis in particular have dominated all discussions of the occupation. In this racist mythology, Arabs have no experience of democracy, are culturally and intellectually backward, and are devoted to fundamentalist religious ideologies that reject modernity in its entirety. No matter that Iraq is a birthplace for immensely vital cultural and intellectual traditions that are foundations for modern society. No matter that, in fact, Iraq was a largely secular and tremendously developed society, a center of learning in the modern Arab world. No matter that it had a vibrant working class that developed rich traditions of political and economic organization.

In that context, we think it is important to consider the experience of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which is inseparable from the experience of the workers' movement in Iraq. Though the party made numerous mistakes, which Salucci

here evaluates with no illusions, it also represented the aspirations of many people in Iraq and throughout the Middle East for a truly democratic and secular organization of the region. (Of course, the United States bitterly—indeed violently—opposed this secular project, lending support to the Baathist massacre of thousands of Iraqi communists, and thereby also encouraged the rise of Islamist movements in the region.) Members of the ICP were among millions who envisioned a Middle East without the boundaries drawn by the imperial powers in their own interests. A Middle East in which the religious, ethnic, and cultural divisions sown by those same powers—and the massive inequalities in distribution of the region's resources, particularly its oil wealth—could be overcome, and the people of the region could put those resources toward meeting human needs. At Haymarket Books, we think that task remains a vital one today, and we hope this book will contribute in some small way to discussions of how best to achieve that goal.

Anthony Arno and Ahmed Shawki for Haymarket Books

FOREWORD BY TARIQ ALI

Resistance Is the First Step Towards Iraqi Independence

Some weeks ago, Pentagon inmates were invited to a special in-house showing of an old movie. It was the *Battle of Algiers*, Gillo Pontecorvo's anti-colonial classic, initially banned in France. One assumes the purpose of the screening was purely educative. The French won that battle, but lost the war.

At least the Pentagon understands that the resistance in Iraq is following a familiar anti-colonial pattern. In the movie, they would have seen acts carried out by the Algerian maquis almost half a century ago, which could have been filmed in Fallujah or Baghdad last week. Then, as now, the occupying power described all such activities as "terrorist." Then, as now, prisoners were taken and tortured, houses that harbored them or their relatives were destroyed, and repression was multiplied. In the end, the French had to withdraw.

As American "postwar" casualties now exceed those sus-

This essay was first published in the *Guardian*, November 3, 2003.
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tained during the invasion (which cost the Iraqis at least 15,000 lives), a debate of sorts has begun in the United States. Few can deny that Iraq under U.S. occupation is in a much worse state than it was under Saddam Hussein. There is no reconstruction. There is mass unemployment. Daily life is a misery, and the occupiers and their puppets cannot provide even the basic amenities of life. The U.S. doesn't even trust the Iraqis to clean their barracks, and so south Asian and Filipino migrants are being used. This is colonialism in the epoch of neo-liberal capitalism, and so U.S. and "friendly" companies are given precedence. Even under the best circumstances, an occupied Iraq would become an oligarchy of crony capitalism, the new cosmopolitanism of Bechtel and Halliburton.

It is the combination of all this that fuels the resistance and encourages many young men to fight. Few are prepared to betray those who are fighting. This is crucially important, because without the tacit support of the population, a sustained resistance is virtually impossible.

The Iraqi maquis have weakened George Bush's position in the U.S. and enabled Democrat politicians to criticize the White House, with Howard Dean daring to suggest a total U.S. withdrawal within two years. Even the *bien pensants* who opposed the war but support the occupation and denounce the resistance know that without it they would have been confronted with a triumphalist chorus from the warmongers. Most important, the disaster in Iraq has indefinitely delayed further adventures in Iran and Syria.

One of the more comical sights in recent months was

Paul Wolfowitz on one of his many visits informing a press conference in Baghdad that the “main problem was that there were too many foreigners in Iraq.” Most Iraqis see the occupation armies as the real “foreign terrorists.” Why? Because once you occupy a country, you have to behave in colonial fashion. This happens even where there is no resistance, as in the protectorates of Bosnia and Kosovo. Where there is resistance, as in Iraq, the only model on offer is a mixture of Gaza and Guantánamo.

Nor does it behoove western commentators whose countries are occupying Iraq to lay down conditions for those opposing it. It is an ugly occupation, and this determines the response. According to Iraqi opposition sources, there are more than 40 different resistance organizations. They consist of Baathists, dissident communists, disgusted by the treachery of the Iraqi Communist Party in backing the occupation, nationalists, groups of Iraqi soldiers and officers disbanded by the occupation, and Sunni and Shia religious groups.

The great poets of Iraq—Saadi Youssef and Mudhaffar al-Nawab—once brutally persecuted by Saddam, but still in exile, are the consciences of their nation. Their angry poems denouncing the occupation and heaping scorn on the jackals—or quislings—help to sustain the spirit of resistance and renewal.

Youssef writes:

I'll spit in the jackals' faces
 I'll spit on their lists
 I'll declare that we are the people of Iraq
 We are the ancestral trees of this land.

And Nawab:

And never trust a freedom fighter
 Who turns up with no arms
 Believe me, I got burnt in that crematorium
 Truth is, you're only as big as your cannons
 While those who wave knives and forks
 Simply have eyes for their stomachs.

In other words, the resistance is predominantly Iraqi—though I would not be surprised if other Arabs are crossing the borders to help. If there are Poles and Ukrainians in Baghdad and Najaf, why should Arabs not help each other? The key fact of the resistance is that it is decentralized—the classic first stage of guerrilla warfare against an occupying army. Yesterday's downing of a U.S. Chinook helicopter follows that same pattern. Whether these groups will move to the second stage and establish an Iraqi National Liberation Front remains to be seen.

As for the UN acting as an "honest broker," forget it—especially in Iraq, where it is part of the problem. Leaving aside its previous record (as the administrator of the killer sanctions, and the backer of weekly Anglo-American bombing raids for twelve years), on October 16, 2003, the security council disgraced itself again by welcoming "the positive response of the international community ... to the broadly representative governing council ... [and] supports the governing council's efforts to mobilize the people of Iraq ..." Meanwhile a beaming fraudster, Ahmed Chalabi, was given the Iraqi seat at the UN. One can't help recalling how the U.S. and Britain insisted on Pol Pot retaining his seat for over a decade after being toppled

by the Vietnamese. The only norm recognized by the security council is brute force, and today there is only one power with the capacity to deploy it. That is why, for many in the southern hemisphere and elsewhere, the UN is the U.S.

The Arab east is today the venue of a dual occupation: the U.S.-Israeli occupation of Palestine and Iraq. If initially the Palestinians were demoralized by the fall of Baghdad, the emergence of a resistance movement has encouraged them. After Baghdad fell, the Israeli war leader, Ariel Sharon, told the Palestinians to "come to your senses now that your protector has gone." As if the Palestinian struggle was dependent on Saddam or any other individual. This old colonial notion that the Arabs are lost without a headman is being contested in Gaza and Baghdad. And were Saddam to drop dead tomorrow, the resistance would increase rather than die down.

Sooner or later, all foreign troops will have to leave Iraq. If they do not do so voluntarily, they will be driven out. Their continuing presence is a spur to violence. When Iraq's people regain control of their own destiny they will decide the internal structures and the external policies of their country. One can hope that this will combine democracy and social justice, a formula that has set Latin America alight but is greatly resented by the Empire. Meanwhile, Iraqis have one thing of which they can be proud and of which British and U.S. citizens should be envious: an opposition.

Introduction

The following work, with the exception of the epilogue, "The Communist Left in Iraq Under U.S. Occupation," was conceived in response to the need to shed light on the "other Iraq," that of the working classes and their struggles, an Iraq completely ignored by the media and the left wing during the dramatic days of preparations for war by the U.S.-British coalition. The present volume attempts to reconstruct the history of the Iraqi Communist Party and the Iraqi workers' movement, an essential part of the country's past, which remains largely unknown except to a very limited circle of experts in this field.

At the same time, this work aims to elucidate what I consider to be certain crucially important features of Iraq's history, in particular, the relationship between the various phases of communist strategy, the dynamics of class struggle, and the nature of the country in which diverse social and political subjects operate. The case of Iraq is especially interesting from this point of view; not only does it constitute a decisive test of the bourgeois national revolution in a semi-

colonial nation (during the 1950s), the step-by-step strategy of the communist movement, and the theory of permanent revolution, but it also forces us to reconsider the dynamics subsequent to the failure of this bourgeois national revolution, that is, the rise to power of a form of "state capitalism," about which diverse theories have been formulated. I am not going to offer any overall interpretation of the interweaving of these features of Iraqi history. I am merely going to describe some of the positions that have emerged and offer some analytical views and thoughts for further reflection.

I hope that these will help the reader gain a fuller understanding of the extremely complex situation—so open to diverse interpretation—in today's Iraq.

Ilario Salucci

CHAPTER ONE

Overview of the Iraqi Communist Party

A People's History of Iraq

The political Left in Iraq has always been synonymous with the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), whose importance in Iraqi affairs it has been, 1944 onward, cannot be underestimated.

The present leader of the ICP is Hamid Majid Nisra, who was elected secretary of the party's Central Committee in 1995, after it had been guided for thirty years (1964-93) by Aziz Muhammad (Muhammad), a Sunni Kurd, joined the ICP in 1948 at the age of fifteen. He was imprisoned during the early years of the Ba'athist regime as a result of the July Revolution of 1958, at which point he was co-opted onto the ICP's Central Committee.

Since 1983, the ICP has held a party congress every four years, and it operates legally in Iraq Kurdistan (a de facto independent state—subtly not officially recognized as such— with its own parliament, currency, and armed forces). The last congress was held in August 2001. Prior to 1983, however, the party had only managed to organize four congresses since its foundation in 1941: in 1943, 1950, 1974, and 1980. Only the

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Since 1993, the ICP has held a party congress every four years, and it operates legally in Iraqi Kurdistan (a de facto independent state—albeit not officially recognized as such—with its own parliament, currency, and armed forces). The last congress was held in August 2001. Prior to 1993, however, the party had only managed to organize four congresses since its foundation in 1941: in 1945, 1970, 1976, and 1985. Only the

third of these could be organized legally in Baghdad, as the ICP has nearly always had to operate in a clandestine manner, with two exceptions: the five-year period immediately after the July Revolution (when the ICP operated legally in fact, although the ruling powers refused to legalize it), and the five years after the 1973 agreement with Saddam Hussein and Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr's Baath Party.

The ICP is known as the "martyr's party," due to the significant number of militants killed by the various regimes that have held power in Iraq. Indeed, two general secretaries have been murdered. The party's founder, Yusuf Salman Yusuf ("Fahd"), who rebuilt and led the party from 1941 onward, was publicly hanged in 1949 (with his body left in the public square for hours afterward as a warning to Baghdad's workers). Husain ar-Radi ("Salam 'Adil"), party leader from 1955 onward, was arrested and tortured during the first Baath regime, and died in 1963.

Militant membership of the ICP has varied considerably in the past, and has been significantly influenced by repeated waves of repression by successive regimes. When it was reorganized nationwide in 1941, the ICP had fewer than one hundred active members, but five years later, this figure grew to some four thousand, only to drop to a few hundred prior to the July Revolution. However, mid-1959 membership rose to about twenty-five thousand, and fell again to some five thousand by 1967. No figures are available for the 1970s, when the legality of the party undoubtedly led to an increase in membership; between twenty thousand and twenty-five thousand copies of the

party's daily newspaper were being printed. According to some sources, the ICP had about two thousand militants operating clandestinely in 1984, while during the preparations for the August 2001 congress, a party press release spoke of "hundreds" of comrades discussing congress proposals at rank-and-file committee meetings.

These figures, which would seem to suggest that for long periods the ICP operated as a very small organization, are not really indicative of the role played by the ICP in Iraq. In order to fully understand this almost unique experience—the only other mass party in the Arab Middle East with a hegemonic role among workers is the Sudanese Communist Party—we need to go back and analyze not only the ICP's internal affairs, internal debates, dramatic mistakes, heroic efforts to organize the working class, and the splits that have characterized the party's history, but also the entire history of Iraq, one that has been indelibly marked by the struggles of the subordinate classes.

CHAPTER TWO

Roots of the Iraqi Communist Movement, 1924-41

Zaki Khairi ("Jalil"), a veteran of the Iraqi communist movement, in an interview he gave in 1958, recounts his first exposure, at the beginning of the 1920s, to communist ideas:

I was fourteen years old and at the elementary school at that time....I still remember how the instructor—a humble man from the quarter of Albu Shibl—interrupted the reading exercise. The class had just run over passages of an essay in which the author...painted Bolshevism in very dark colors. "The Bolshevik government," the instructor explained, "is a government of the poor. This is why it is regarded with hatred"....I was at a malleable and receptive age and the remark imprinted itself on my thought.

Marxism first made its appearance in Iraq in 1924, in a feminist form. Encouraged by Husain ar-Rahhal (the true precursor of Marxism in Iraq, a polyglot who spoke not only Arabic, but also German, English, Turkish, and Persian—which proved of essential importance, given that no Marxist work had yet been translated into Arabic), a group of politically minded students set up a communist circle and began to publish a paper, *As-Sahifah*. The paper translated articles from

Labour Monthly and *L'Humanité*. Although the circle still had no specific program, its writings conveyed the conviction that the power of tradition needed to be overthrown. Within this framework, the struggle to free women from their "feudal chains" (polygamy, the veil, etc.) took on a new symbolic importance. The paper was accused of religious and moral subversion and was closed down by the authorities after only four months—during which time, six editions had been published; the paper was shut down as soon as it began to apply the concepts of historical materialism to Islam, explaining all religions in material terms, and denouncing the Shariah as having been "formulated for a society that existed a thousand years ago." Many of the ICP's future leaders gained their initial political experience in the ar-Rahhal circle, though ar-Rahhal himself withdrew from all political activity during the 1920s.

In 1927–28, a communist circle composed of young people was founded in Basra. It was encouraged by Petros Vasili, an Assyrian brought up in Tiflis, Georgia, who spread communist ideas throughout Iraq until his expulsion from the country in 1934, and Yusuf Salman Yusuf, who was to become the first important leader of the Iraqi Communist Party.

In 1929, this political circle was transformed into the Liberal Association (as the "antireligious party" was known), and it published a radical democratic program aimed at the promotion of freedom of ideas, words, and actions; a secular state; women's liberation; Arab unity; and modern social and scientific ideas. The promotion of this association was of a

strictly atheistic, antireligious nature, but the peasants and dockers at whom it was aimed showed no great interest. That was the last time the Iraqi Communists came out with anti-Islamic propaganda.

The first communist circle was founded in Baghdad in 1929, followed by another in 1933, and a third in 1935. They brought together a vast variety of people: some had previously been members of the *As-Sahifah* group; some came from the Beirut Communist Committee; others had spent time at Moscow's University for Oriental Workers; still others had returned to Iraq after a period in the United States studying at the Workers' Institute in Boston; and finally there were members of the Anti-Imperialist League (set up by the Comintern and based first in Berlin, then Paris).

Generally speaking, these first Iraqi Communists came from lower-middle-class families, and propaganda in Baghdad was limited more or less to the city's cafés, whereas in Basra and Nasiriya it was addressed mainly to the workers. The first appeal, signed by "a communist worker," appeared in the town of Nasiriya in December 1932. It was entitled "Workers of the World Unite! Long Live the Union of Workers' and Peasants' Republics of the Arab Countries!":

...[T]he unemployed fill the streets...Their women and children have nothing to eat...Has the government contemplated helping them in this cold weather? Nothing of the kind has happened...for the government is only a band against the people...

Workers! The people have rights, which they can only secure by force. Such lessons are laid down in history...Nobody

can feel the misery of the worker except the worker himself. Nobody can know the pain of hunger except the one who is famished. Why should we blame the persons who are eating the fruit of our labor...when we ourselves are encouraging them to rob us?...Do not be deceived by the name of so-and-so as he is from the notables or he is rich or he is from a great family...who are alleged to be honorable when there is no honor except in work and no one is honorable except the worker and the peasant...

Comrades! Have courage! For we are struggling for our honor and our life and the good of the future generations. Forward, Workers! Forward to fruitful action, to freedom, and well-being!

All the political circles in Baghdad, Basra, and Nasiriya agreed to a unifying congress, and on March 8, 1935, the Iraqi Communist Party was founded in Baghdad, under the name of the "Anti-Imperialist Association." The association's manifesto declared:

To the Workers and Peasants, to the Soldiers and Students, to All the Oppressed!

The first Iraqi Revolution [that of 1920] rose on our forearms, we the masses of workers and peasants. From our class came the agonies, the sacrifices, the tens of thousands of victims...The benefits went to the financiers, the feudalists, and the higher officials...To our lot have fallen only hunger, cold, and ruthless disease...and a horde of tax-gatherers without a touch of mercy or humanity...

Today, the English and the ruling class are partners in a compact that aims at perpetuating the oppression and exploitation from which we suffer...The oil and other raw materials of the country have become a preserve for the English and Iraq has been turned into an outlet for their goods and surplus capital and into a war base directed against neighboring peoples, and against any aspiration for freedom that the

Arab countries may entertain. The ruling class, for its part, plunders the proceeds of taxes, misappropriates lands, and builds palaces on the shores of the Tigris and Euphrates. The millions of peasants and workers, in the meantime, continue to starve, and bleed, and writhe in anguish...

We must put an end to conditions grown so unjust and intolerable. We demand a change in the very foundations of life, a momentous change to the advantage of all the productive classes... Let us raise our voice again in the land and let it thunder forth, striking terror into the hearts of our oppressors... Let townsman and villager, worker and peasant, undivided by sect or race and supported by revolutionary thinkers, march side by side to bring about in the first phase of the struggle:

the cancellation of all debts owed by the peasants; their deliverance from all onerous taxes; the distribution to the poor of state lands; and the granting to them of the necessary credits;

the guaranteeing to the workers of freedom of assembly and of speech...; the reopening of their clubs and trade unions; the enactment of a law protecting the workers... against arbitrary dismissals and ensuring them against starvation in their old age; and the realization of the eight-hour day in all Iraqi and foreign-owned places of work...

Down with English imperialism! Down with all enslaving treaties! Long live the united front against imperialism and against the oppressors of the peasants and workers!

After only one month, the party split over whether to stand publicly as the Communist Party. Some groups (those in Basra, Nasiriya, and a few from Baghdad) split from the association, while the remaining nucleus decided to publish an illegal newspaper, the first edition of which came out in July under the title *Kifah-ish-Sha'b* (The People's Struggle), signed by the "Central Committee of the Iraqi Communist Party."

The party's program was published in August 1935, and consisted of six main objectives:

1. the expulsion of the imperialists; the granting of freedom to the people, of complete independence to the Kurds, and of their cultural rights...to all of Iraq's minorities;
2. the distribution of land to the peasantry;
3. the abolition of all debts and land mortgages...;
4. the seizure of all properties belonging to the imperialists—the banks, the oil fields, and the railway works among others—and the expropriation of the vast agricultural estates;
5. the concentration of power in the hands of the workers and peasants; and
6. the launching without delay of the social revolution in all other areas of life and the liberation of the people from manifold subjections.

Inexperience, together with a lack of the discipline needed in a situation of illegality, eventually led to the arrest of those leaders who had published *Kifah-ish-Sha'b* (The People's Struggle, with a circulation of five hundred copies per edition), and the paper ceased publication at the end of 1935.

Those Communists who had not been imprisoned or had been released from prison lent their support to General Bakr Sidqi's coup on October 29, 1936, and joined the Association for Popular Reform, an organization that fought for democratic freedom, workers' right to organize, the eight-hour day, a minimum wage, and a progressive tax system. However, they overestimated the working-class backgrounds of those officers constituting the backbone of the new regime, which went on to repress the workers, communists, and "reformists" alike,

during the wave of strikes that took place in April-May 1937. On July 12, 1937, the Association for Popular Reform was outlawed, and numerous leading Communists were arrested and expelled from or forced to flee Iraq. From then until 1946, no political party was allowed to operate legally within Iraq.

Thanks to the work of Abdallah Mas'ud, a clandestine cell was organized in Baghdad during the summer of 1937, and in January 1938, Yusuf Salman Yusuf joined the group on his return from the USSR (where he had been since 1935). The cell managed to set up a central committee in December 1940 and to launch a paper, *Ash-Shararah* (The Spark). The paper had an initial circulation of only ninety copies, although this would increase to some two thousand two years later.

During the war between the regime led by Rashid Ali al-Gailani and Great Britain in May 1941, the group urged people to join forces with al-Gailani, while at the same time defending the Jews, who had been targeted for oppression by the very same regime. (The group later admitted it had been wrong in supporting al-Gailani, given his later antifascist alliance with Great Britain, a policy that was to become the official Communist line after the Nazis attacked the USSR.) A clear change nevertheless took place during the six-year period between the party's founding and its reconstruction in 1940-41. Interest in Soviet policy was one of the decisive factors in the reformulation of its own political line, which was significantly moderated from the initial, at times rather naïve, self-declared revolutionary mission of the first generation of Iraqi Communists.

On October 29, 1941, the police arrested Abdallah Mas'ud, the leader of the rebuilt Communist group. His post as party general secretary was taken by Yusuf Salman Yusuf, and, under the latter's leadership, the Iraqi Communist Party would emerge as the most important political force in the country within the span of seven years.

Social structure under the monarchy

In the words of Hanna Batatu,

[U]nder the Ottomans, Iraq consisted to no little extent of distinct, self-absorbed, feebly interconnected societies; and, partly, of the interpenetration of a social form, oriented towards moneymaking and the expansion of private property and shaped essentially by Iraq's relatively recent ties to a world market,...with older social forms attaching value to noble lineage, or knowledge of religion, or possession of sanctity or fighting prowess in tribal raids, and dominated largely by local bonds and local outlooks, by small-scale handicraft or subsistence agricultural production and, outside of the towns, by state or communal tribal forms of property.

The area presently known as Iraq was incorporated into the world economy as an exporter of wheat during the second half of the nineteenth century, starting with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Market-oriented agriculture experienced an unprecedented boom: whereas in the period 1867–71, cereals worth £140,000 per year were being exported by Iraq, by 1912–13 this figure had risen to £8 million per year. Commercial farming became the most important source of wealth and power, but also of social strife, due to the breakup of Iraq's traditional pastoral economy with its tribal basis. (In 1867, no-

mads accounted for 37 percent of the entire population; by 1930, this figure had fallen to 7 percent. The number of peasant farmers grew from 41 percent to 68 percent of the population during those same years.) The breaking up of common ownership of land and the emergence of tribal chiefs—sheikhs in Arab areas and *agha* in Kurdish ones—as aspiring landowners accompanied this process. This had been an uncertain process under Ottoman rule, characterized by conflict between the sheikhs and the Turkish rulers, and among the various sheikhs; and by the breakup of diverse nomadic tribes, who questioned the role of the sheikhs. However, the situation changed radically during British control, then occupation, of the three Ottoman provinces of Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul—with the foundation of the state of Iraq, ruled by the Hashemite monarchy from 1921 onward, subsequently declared independent in 1932. The British viewed the sheikhs, important landowners, as the cornerstones of Iraqi society. A separate legal system was created specifically for these tribes, reaffirming (and legalizing) their power, and all subsequent peasant revolts were promptly repressed by military forces.

The big landowners became the main social base for the monarchy, which operated exclusively in favor of the former, issuing laws establishing the landowners' rights, putting down all forms of peasant revolt, and spending a good part of the state budget for the landowners' benefit. The landowners managed to take possession of vast quantities of land, quantities that would have been unthinkable in any other Middle Eastern country. In fact, at the end of this period, in 1958, two-thirds

of all farmland belonged to just 2 percent of those who possessed some form of land. Among the big landowners, 49 families owned some 17 percent of the country's total farmland (whereas 64 percent of all smallholders together owned just 3.6 percent of this land).

The prevailing agricultural system was that of the *iqta*, that is, of sharecropping and the renting of large estates, characterized by an almost servile relationship between the peasant farmers and their landlords. This system of farm management meant that production for export only increased as a result of an increase in the area of farmed land (which rose fivefold between 1913 and 1943, and doubled between 1943 and 1958) and the exploitation of peasants (during the 1950s, many peasants cultivating rented land were allowed to keep only 15 percent to 20 percent of their harvest). Farming methods themselves remained backward.

Industrial growth was held back by the underdevelopment of the agricultural system, developing slowly, restricted as it was to the production of goods for domestic consumption (which in itself was rather limited). Oil production, completely in the hands of foreign companies, began to take off from 1934 onward. The majority of the industrial workforce was concentrated at the port of Basra (five thousand workers during the 1940s), on the railways (eleven thousand workers), and in the oil industry (thirteen thousand workers). Overall, the total number of Iraqi workers employed by companies with more than ten employees rose from thirteen thousand in 1926 to sixty-three thousand in 1954, half of whom were concentrated

in Basra and Baghdad.

During the 1950s, the working class—including those working in the transport and service industries—numbered around four hundred thousand people (from a total urban population of 2.6 million), although the majority still worked for extremely small firms with fewer than five employees.

Poverty was rife at that time, and the hardest-hit section of the population was the peasantry. Between 1939 and 1948, food prices increased eightfold, whereas the average non-skilled wage increased only fourfold. In the 1950s, 80 percent of the population (90 percent of women) were illiterate. There was only one doctor for every six thousand inhabitants and one dentist for every five hundred thousand. No form of employment benefit, health insurance, or old-age pension existed in Iraq at that time, and average life expectancy in rural areas was between thirty-five and thirty-nine years.

The Iraqi middle class was fragile and could be found in the agricultural, commercial, and industrial sectors. The agricultural component consisted in the main of the rentier class, while the commercial component, the strongest of the three, was scarcely interested in long-term industrial investment. The industrial bourgeoisie, the last of the three to emerge, was dependent on agricultural raw materials (in fact, more than 34 percent of Iraqi industry depended on agriculture) and had direct family ties with the rural rentier class.

Iraq was the scene of insurrections, revolts, and social struggles for the entire period of monarchical rule. In 1920, there was a massive insurrection against British occupation,

which was brutally repressed, with some ten thousand victims (according to British author and soldier T.E. Lawrence, also known as Lawrence of Arabia). There were all of seven Kurdish insurrections in the period between 1919 and 1945. In 1936, the tribes from the central Euphrates areas revolted, creating a situation similar to that of 1920.

The first trade-union organization, the Craftsmen's Association, was founded in 1929 and led by Muhammad Salih al-Qazzaz, a mechanic who would become the first working-class leader in Iraq. This association combined certain features of the corporate "guild" with more modern aspects of trade unionism, and its identity and policies were a mixture of nationalism and class-consciousness. It organized a fourteen-day strike in July 1931 to protest new council taxes, and this strike developed into a nationwide protest movement against the ruling monarchy supported by the British. The government responded by outlawing the association and arresting al-Qazzaz. In 1932, the latter founded the first trade-union federation in Iraq, which was outlawed in January 1934, after organizing the monthlong boycott of Baghdad's British-owned electric company. For some ten years thereafter, organizing any legal form of trade-union activity proved virtually impossible; however, an estimated twenty thousand workers throughout the country took part in a lengthy mass strike in April–May 1937 to demand higher wages. During the period 1944–46, sixteen trade unions were legalized, twelve of them run by the Communist Party. From that moment on, trade-union activity in Iraq became synonymous with Communist Party activity.

The first of a series of peasant revolts against the sheikh landowners occurred in 1947 (seven more would occur between 1952 and 1958). Then there was the mass revolt of Baghdad in 1948, known as *al-Wathbah* (The Leap), followed by the intifadas in 1952 and 1956.

From the 1940s on, a radical change in the deeper layers of Iraqi society took place. The period of tribal struggle came to an end: the peasant revolts from 1947 to 1958 were no longer led by tribal chiefs; they were directed against these chiefs. The 1931 strike was against a municipal tax and a government hated by the Iraqi people, while the discontent and unrest of the 1940s became a social as well as a political issue. Anger was no longer directed against a particular government, but against the existing social order. In the words of Batatu:

In the Iraqi environment, Marxist theory, with all its shortcomings, was, at least in its trenchant class criticism, relevant. It translated, even if in an exaggerated direction—and exaggeration engenders strength in an emotionally charged climate—what the Iraqi now persistently sensed around him: the crude class reality of Iraq.

CHAPTER THREE

The Iraqi Communist Party, 1941-58

The turning point in international politics caused by the Nazi invasion of the USSR in June 1941 did not produce any immediate change in the Iraqi Communist Party's attitude toward the British occupation. In fact, it was not until May 1942 that the ICP's paper lent its full support to the position taken by Moscow, when it declared:

[O]ur party regards the British army, which is now fighting Nazism, as an army of liberation...we must, therefore, help the British army in Iraq in every possible way.

This in turn meant that the ICP now sided with the monarchy and the landowners who ruled the country.

The reconstruction of the ICP under the leadership of Yusuf Salman Yusuf ("Fahd") involved the strong centralization of party organization and the rejection of any criticism of the party's general secretary. This led to strong dissent from certain ICP members and, in August 1942, to the expulsion of a number of militants from the party, who subsequently formed a group that published the newspaper *Il-al-Amam*

(The Way Forward). Later that same year, two Iraqi Communist Parties formed. The first was led by Abdallah Mas'ud, who had recently been released from prison, and it had its own paper, *Ash-Shararah* (The Spark), while the second was led by Fahd and had its paper, *Al-Qa'idah* (The Foundation). The *Il-al-Amam* and *Ash-Shararah* groups, after being significantly weakened by a wave of arrests, decided to join together and publish one paper, *Wahdat-un-Nidal* (The United Struggle). In February 1944, the party split further, and the new group that emerged, which was highly critical of Fahd's "left-wing extremism," published the paper *Al-'Amal* (Labor). All the splinter groups had asked for an ICP congress and the establishment of statutory internal rules, a request that Fahd rejected:

[I]n the existing international conditions the holding of congresses by secret Communist parties in countries adhering to the democratic camp could provoke collisions between the Communists and the authorities that are in the interests of neither side nor to the good of the peoples struggling against fascism.

From early 1944 on, Fahd's Communist Party launched a clandestine campaign that targeted the country's industrial workers, setting up groups first in Baghdad and then throughout the rest of the country. A number of intellectuals from the lower middle class ("the people's intelligentsia") were involved in running the organization. A party conference was finally convened in March 1944, to be followed by the party's first congress in March 1945, which enabled the dissidents from *Wahdat-un-Nidal* to rejoin the party's ranks.

The ICP managed to take root among certain students and teachers and among the urban working classes of Basra, Baghdad, and Kirkuk; in fact, it had its stronghold in the working-class quarters and bidonvilles that were home to the vast majority of peasants migrating from the countryside to the city. The party conference adopted a "national charter," combining a mixture of patriotic and democratic policies perceived from a more or less lower-middle-class perspective, while the role of the workers was confined to the submission of legal or trade-union demands.

Nothing more was mentioned of the socialist vision, the people's republic, or the abolition of the Anglo-Iraqi Treaty (which established the *de facto* power of Great Britain over Iraq)—only of the revision of certain clauses. No longer would there be any expropriation of foreign or big landowner capital or any independence for the Kurds (accused of reactionary demands in the interests of imperialism). The "stage" of the struggle was that "of national liberation and the fight for democratic rights," and objectives had to be in keeping with the phase of the "national bourgeois revolution." (It should be said that the policy proposed by Moscow at the time and adopted wholesale by the Syrian Communist Party meant the breakup of the party—a step that the ICP always refused to take. The ICP argued fiercely against the "liquidators," who in Iraq advocated this line through the People's Party from 1945 to 1947.)

From January 1944 on, the ICP's leadership adopted a series of positions, albeit somewhat wavering, that pointed toward ending all support for the British army and the Iraqi

government. At first this appeared in a veiled form, with a criticism of the increase in the cost of living, and then in a more overt manner, with strong condemnation in April 1945 of the British presence in Iraq. This led to the proclamation in January 1946 that "the right way forward for our democratic liberation movement is the revolutionary path." The party finally came out and strongly attacked the Iraqi government after police killed a demonstrator on June 28, 1946, in Baghdad (the demonstration in question was in support of the Palestinians and against the British presence in Iraq) and ten workers on July 12 during a strike at the Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk. The government's reaction was of a purely repressive nature: in February 1947 Fahd was arrested (but not identified as general secretary of the ICP) and sentenced to the death penalty (later commuted to life imprisonment after numerous international protests). Despite the wave of arrests, the ICP quickly managed to reorganize, and in September 1947, the splinter group *Al-'Amal* returned to the party fold.

During the period from 1944 to 1946, the most important of the unions coincided with the largest groups of workers: the Basra port workers, the railway workers, and the oil workers. In these three sectors, 30 percent to 60 percent of the workforce was unionized, and all major union leaders were ICP members. Between April 1945 and May 1947, the first massive wave of strikes hit all three sectors (some of which lasted a number of weeks), demanding wage increases, the legalization of trade-union bodies, and genuine national independence from the continued British presence in Iraq. The government

and the British (who owned both the oil wells and the railways) responded by first conceding wage increases, then breaking up the unions after the strikes ended and arresting the union leaders.

January 1948 saw the largest-ever mass insurrection against the monarchy, al-Wathbah, in Baghdad. Events began with student demonstrations held on January 4 in protest against plans for a new Anglo-Iraqi Treaty designed to keep Iraq a British protectorate. These demonstrations, which were characterized by a number of violent incidents, continued for several days, then grew in size after the treaty was signed on January 15. They reached a peak on January 20-21, when, urged on by the Communist groups, the railway workers downed tools and joined the protest, as did their fellow workers from Baghdad's factories, together with the unemployed and large numbers of peasants who had recently left their villages to move to the capital. The police tried to stop the protesters (armed with sticks), shooting and killing a number of them; this did not, however, stop the demonstrations. In the words of Batatu, "[T]he atmosphere in Baghdad was one of social revolution." The ICP got involved in an argument with the "extremist fringes" who took part in the demonstrations waving banners demanding an end to the monarchy and the founding of a republic. The treaty was annulled on January 21, but the ICP organized a series of other demonstrations in an attempt to bring down the government. There was a massive demonstration on January 23, followed by another on January 27. While the first of the two went off without police

intervention, on January 27, the government decided to break up the mass protest movement by force, and the police fired indiscriminately at the demonstrators, killing between three hundred and four hundred people. Once again, despite the brutality of the government's reaction, the demonstrators reorganized their ranks, forcing the police to back off in the end. The Iraqi prime minister fled the country for Britain shortly afterward, and a new government was formed.

This marked the beginning of a period of continuous political protest throughout the country that lasted until the spring. There were repeated strikes on the railways from March to May (the union had been outlawed in April 1945, so the ICP directly organized the striking workers), at the oil drilling stations in April and May (the strike at station K-3, near Haditha, was to become a legend of its kind, with the Great March on Baghdad of some three thousand workers), and at the port of Basra in April and May. A peasant revolt also exploded during the month of April, led by the ICP at Arbat. The workers demanded wage increases, "bread and shoes," democratic rights, the release of political prisoners, and national independence. The government's response to their demands, as in 1945-47, was simply to outlaw workers' organizations, arrest union leaders, and make a partial concession to wage demands.

Al-Wathbah gave considerable impetus to an increase of both members of the ICP and radicalism within the party—albeit within the framework of plans for a "national democratic government" led by the Iraqi bourgeoisie. On May 15, martial

law was declared, leading to a new wave of repressive measures. The final blow to the ICP's hopes was dealt on July 6, 1948, when after seven months of resistance to the line dictated by Moscow, the ICP finally accepted the division of Palestine and the foundation of the state of Israel. Hundreds of militants left the party in disgust.

One after another of the party's structures collapsed during the final months of 1948 as a result of the government's repressive measures and the inability to reorganize party activity. Hundreds of members were arrested, while the government discovered Fahd's role as party general secretary and had him publicly hanged in February 1949. Membership of the ICP plummeted from four thousand militants to a few hundred and split into five different factions.

Reconstruction began very slowly in June 1949, and in February 1950, the paper *Al-Qa'idah* reappeared, although not until the fall of 1951 could the crisis finally be considered over. Thus it was that the ICP slowly reemerged and began to play an active role once again in the political struggle. It took part and jointly led a new wave of strike action in the spring and fall of 1952, culminating in the intifada of November 22-24, when mass demonstrations in Baghdad and other cities called for the establishment of democratic civil rights and free elections. The government, true to form, responded with repressive measures and the reintroduction of martial law; consequently, all political parties were outlawed (the ICP had always been so) and their leaders arrested. However, as soon as martial law was suspended the following year, a new wave of strikes swept

the country, and in Basra, the government reimposed martial law in January 1954. The rise to power of Nuri as-Said led once again to the outlawing, in June 1954, of all political parties, cultural circles, unions, and independent media.

During those years, the ICP moved further to the left with its adoption of a new "national charter" in March 1953 to replace the one drawn up in 1944. This new charter aimed at the establishment of "a democratic people's republic representing the will of the nation's workers, peasants and people," and recognized the right to self-determination and, if necessary, secession of the Kurdish people. This led to the expulsion of seventy-three party members who were opposed to adoption of the new charter and in favor of the previous position held by Fahd. These opponents of the new model then founded their own mouthpiece, *Rayat-ush-Shaghghilah* (The Workers' Flag). In the months that followed, the ICP, led by Hamid 'Hutman, adopted a Maoist line, calling for a "people's revolution," the "proletarian taking over of power...as the immediate task in hand," together with the setting up of "a revolutionary people's army" in the name of the "armed struggle," whose task it was to cover the country in "revolutionary strongholds." This line was hardened further between June 1954 and June 1955, at a time when party membership included some five hundred militants.

In June 1955, the line taken by 'Hutman was repudiated by the Central Committee, who then proceeded to elect ar-Radi general secretary. Similarly, all the "extremist" positions

adopted in 1953 were rejected, and within the space of one year, the splinter group *Rayat-ush-Shaghghilah* had rejoined the party. The party, in turn, began publication of a new paper entitled *Ittihad-ush-Sha'b* (The People's Union).

In July 1955, the USSR and the Egypt of the "Free Officers," who by means of a coup d'état had overthrown the monarchy three years earlier, signed an arms agreement. This marked a turning point in the history of the ICP, with its embrace of the cause of pan-Arab nationalism as expounded by Egypt's leaders at that time. This line was further strengthened in July of the following year, when subsequent to the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Egypt was attacked by an Anglo-French-Israeli coalition force. The line was then made official policy at the second party conference held in September 1956, although it was to be short-lived, as it failed to survive the impact of the July 1958 Revolution. For the ICP, "the immediate task [was] to form a patriotic government in order to end Iraq's isolation from the Arab liberation movement and to adopt an independent, patriotic Arab policy."

The attack on Egypt, preceded by the Baghdad Pact (an anticommunist pact against Arab nationalism, overseen by the United States and signed by the governments of Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey), led to a wave of protest and revolts in Iraq, this time concentrated in the more outlying areas Mosul, Kirkuk, and Basra, with genuine insurrections in Najaf and Havy.

As always, the government responded with the use of mili-

tary force, and the resulting intifada led to the creation of a United National Front (UNF) in February 1957. The UNF included the ICP, the National Democratic Party (the nationalistic, antimonarchical bourgeois party of Iraq), the Baath Party (set up at the beginning of the 1950s with the principle objective of pan-Arab nationalism), together with other political groups. The aims of the UNF were the political and economic independence of Iraq, the abolition of the Baghdad Pact, the destruction of the *iqta* system, the establishment of democratic rights and civil liberties, together with Arab solidarity against imperialism and Zionism.

Apart from the brief "extremist" period from 1953 to 1955, the strategic position adopted by the ICP remained consistent throughout those years (and throughout the subsequent period as well). In the words of Samira Haj:

While [the] theoretical position [of the CP] affirmed class struggle and internationalism, in practice, the party's revolutionary politics were constantly compromised by the doctrine of the two-stage revolution...Accepting [this doctrine] the party saw the anti-colonial struggle in Iraq as a part of an inevitable evolutionary process aiming toward a national bourgeois revolution. The party saw its central role as leading the "oppressed classes" (workers and peasants) into an alliance with the progressive faction of the national "bourgeoisie" to forge the struggle for liberation, social reforms, and the extension of democratic rights within the framework of a bourgeois state...The dogmatic commitment to the doctrine of a separate "bourgeois democratic" stage of development proved...detrimental to the ICP, to its cadre, and to the national revolution itself. In upholding these principles, the ICP was compelled in effect to subordinate class conflict to the national struggle...[supporting] Iraqi nationalism over pan-Arab na-

tionalism...[and] assuming that there was a "national bourgeoisie" capable of carrying [the agrarian revolution] out... [T]he ICP miscalculated primarily in not recognizing the intrinsic weakness of the Iraqi "bourgeoisie" and this group's close ties to the agrarian structures.

Despite this strategic orientation and its permanent clandestine status, the ICP nevertheless managed to play a central role in Iraqi political life. The underlying reason for this was that it constituted the main organizational channel for a considerable proportion of the country's working class, voicing the workers' radical demands. The devotion of militant Communists to the cause of the Iraqi working class was admirable. While it is true that the ICP in fact "subordinated the class struggle to the nationalist struggle," it is likewise true that it refused to "ignore" the class struggle in the name of Iraqi nationalism. From this point of view, it is interesting to look at the conflict between the ICP and its Syrian counterpart in 1945-47, when the former refused to break up the party and opt for a legal, nationalist political organization open to the bourgeoisie. The Syrian option (in Iraq, the path chosen by the People's Party) reflected the line adopted by Moscow. On this particular occasion, the ICP maintained its independent position and, as a result, the independence of the working class from bourgeois forces. The ICP effectively gave in to such pressures on other occasions, such as in 1941, when the new line of "integration into the democratic camp" was implemented (only one year after its adoption by Moscow). This line was subsequently dropped before Moscow did likewise. In

1948, it accepted the division of Palestine and the creation of an Israeli state (a decision opposed by Fahd, according to several witnesses at the time), which was to have devastating consequences for the ICP.

The subordination of the ICP to Soviet bureaucracy was strategic, albeit characterized by continual friction and infighting over the national situation (resulting in almost all the splits the party experienced). This eventually led to the breakup of the party for a brief period in 1954–55. This strategy exacerbated the various shortcomings of the ICP. During the terrible period of struggle against the Iraqi monarchy, such weaknesses only marginally affected the ICP's entrenchment in the working class (and were also an obstacle to the ICP's work in the Kurd region of Iraq). However, during the revolutionary period from 1958 onward, the ICP's problems clearly emerged and led it—with the working class as a whole (given the lack of any alternative political leadership)—toward catastrophe.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Qasim Years, 1958–63

In a military coup organized by a group of "Free Officers" on July 14, 1958, the Iraqi monarchy was abolished and the members of the royal family assassinated. Many Iraqi cities immediately witnessed mass demonstrations (in the case of Baghdad, conservative estimates gave the number of demonstrators as one hundred thousand), which easily broke any remaining resistance from supporters of the old regime. This mass protest, the final result of years of class struggle, was in the end the one thing that gave real meaning to the events of July 1958. For this reason, both the Iraqi and the international Left described it as a *revolution* rather than a coup d'état.

The new government that emerged from this revolution was a mixture of the military and the political but did not include members of either the ICP or the Kurdistan Democratic Party–Iraq (KDP) led by Mustafa Barzani. The "Free Officer" Abdul Karim Qasim (brigade general) was appointed prime minister, while Colonel Abdel Salam Aref was made deputy prime minister.

The supporters of the old regime were expelled from the armed forces, the police, and the state apparatus; the country's political prisoners were freed; and, within the space of a few months, agricultural reform was passed, progressive taxation was introduced, the country left the Baghdad Pact, British military bases were evacuated, and workers' and peasants' unions were legalized.

Qasim's government lent its support to private investment in industry, conceding tax exemptions, special loans, and a carefully designed protectionist policy. The oil companies were not targeted for any special measures until December 1961, when the government unilaterally abolished their rights to any unexploited areas.

During the hectic month of August 1958, Abdel Salam Aref traveled the length and breadth of the province giving vehement speeches in favor of a "popular, patriotic, socialist republic" and against all forms of "indifference, privilege, and rank of power" (which immediately led to protests from the ICP, which argued that such slogans "led the social patriotic ranks into the arms of imperialism") among peasant farmers who downed their hoes to take possession and ransack the lands of the sheikhs.

During the months following the July Revolution, state organization proved particularly weak, and the government and its leaders could only survive with the approval of the people. In demanding democratic reforms and revolutionary changes through the best organization to survive the reign of the monarchy, the ICP, with its heroic past of class struggle

waged in the darkest of times, emerged as the one organization that reflected the views and hopes of the working classes. The Communist Party "controlled the routes" to Baghdad, and within the space of a few months, its membership rose to some twenty-five thousand.

The objective of the national revolution, as defined by its leaders, was twofold: to liberate Iraq from the claws of the oligarchic monarchy and its creator, British imperialism; and to rebuild and reconstruct the nation by promoting social and economic development on behalf of its people. The revolution, in representing the "will of the nation," held "universal" goals that transcended class, ethnic, religious, and gender differences...[but] the national revolutionary state...became instead the arena of intense struggle whereby various groups and interests interacted, allied with, and contested each other.

There were two main areas of conflict. On the one hand, there was the clash between the pan-Arab nationalists (the Baathists), who demanded immediate union with Syria and Egypt, and their opponents, first and foremost the liberals, the Communists, and Qasim. On the other hand, there was conflict over agrarian reform between the nationalists (supported by the military) and the Communists.

With regard to the first of these two questions, the ICP opposed the pan-Arab nationalist position by pointing out the national specificity of the Arab states (the logical conclusion of which was that the Iraqi bourgeoisie was in some way more revolutionary than the Egyptian bourgeoisie!). According to this analysis, the July Revolution was a national bourgeois revolution, and thus union with Syria and Egypt (the latter's industrial development was far superior to that of Iraq) would

have hindered the growth of industry and national capital. According to Aziz al-Hajj, one of the most important leaders of the ICP:

It is only natural that we oppose a "Prussian style" union... We call for [a federal form of] unification that will guarantee the interests of all classes in each of the individual Arab states ... (unification) that will take into consideration the uneven development in these countries... that will respect people's choice for "democratic rule"... [W]e will not at this point support an undemocratic union that will lead to the growth and expansion of the Egyptian national bourgeoisie at the expense of other Arab workers, merchants and capitalists... [A]t this stage it is but natural for us to struggle on behalf of the Iraqi national bourgeoisie and its development.

In the words of another party leader, Amer Abdallah, the most important theoretician within the party and true leader of the ICP until his expulsion in the summer of 1961:

[O]ur party supports the economic interests of the national bourgeoisie as a fundamental condition for the development of a democratic bourgeois state... The aim of the revolution is to establish social and economic reforms within the framework of capitalist relations of production... We consider this revolution to be a popular revolution.

Within the context of the conflict with the pan-Arab nationalists, Abdel Salam Aref was first dismissed from his role as deputy prime minister (on September 30, 1958), then arrested and condemned to death. (This sentence was subsequently commuted to life imprisonment.) The battle with the pan-Arab nationalists spread to the power struggle in the country as a whole, and the ICP was the main political force to repress the popular movement for a union of Arab nations. There was con-

tinuous, bloody conflict, together with the expulsion from the trade unions of those workers in favor of a pan-Arab union, all of which culminated in the defeat of the military revolt led by pan-Arab supporters from among Fifth Brigade officers in March 1959 in the streets of Mosul. This event grouped together all the most reactionary forces (more for economic than ideological reasons, given the nature of the common enemy, that is, the government of agrarian reform and the Communists) in support of the pan-Arab nationalists. The revolt was violently crushed, and for many years after was to mark the defeat of the Baathists and Nasserites in Iraq. (It also served to discredit communism in the other Arab states, where pan-Arab nationalism was deeply rooted among the people.) According to Batatu:

The events of March at Mosul illumined with a flaming glare the complexity of the conflicts that agitated Iraq and disclosed its various social forces in their essential nature and in genuine line-up of their life interests. For four days and four nights Kurds and Yezidis stood against Arabs; Assyrian and Aramean Christians against Arab Muslims; the Arab tribe of Albu Mutaiwit against the Arab tribe of Shammar; the Kurdish tribe of al-Gargariyyah against Arab Albu Mutaiwit; the peasants of the Mosul country against their landlords; the soldiers of the Fifth Brigade against their officers; the periphery of the city of Mosul against its center; the plebeians of the Arab quarters of al-Makkawi and Wadi Hajar against the aristocrats of the Arab quarter of ad-Dawwasah; and within the quarter of Bab al-Baid, the family of al-Rajabu against its traditional rivals, the Aghawat. It seemed as if all social cement dissolved and all political authority vanished. Individualism, breaking out, waxed into anarchy. The struggle between nationalists and Communists had released age-old antagonisms,

investing them with an explosive force and carrying them to the point of civil war.

What added to the acuteness of the conflicts was the high degree of coincidence between the economic and ethnic or religious divisions. For example, many of the soldiers of the Fifth Brigade were not only from the poorer layers of the population, but were also Kurds, whereas the officers were preponderantly from the Arab middle or lower middle classes. Again, many of the peasants in the villages around Mosul were Christian Arameans, whereas the landlords were, for the most part, Muslim Arabs or Arabized Muslims.

Where the economic and ethnic or confessional divisions did not coincide, it was often not the racial or religious, but the class factor that asserted itself. The Arab soldiers clung not to the Arab officers, but to the Kurdish soldiers. The landed chieftains of Kurdish al-Gargariyyah sided with the landed chieftains of Arab Shammar. The old and affluent commercial Christian families such as the Baituns, Sarsams, and Rassams did not make common cause with the Christian peasants. When acting on their own initiative, the peasants, whatever their nation, poured their wrath upon the landlords indiscriminately and without regard even to political alignment: they killed among others, Ali al-Umari, a Muslim Arab and an anti-Qasimite; Qasim Hadid, a Muslim Arab and the uncle of Muhammad Hadid, Qasim's most trusted minister; and Yusuf Namrud, a fence-sitter and a notorious Christian Aramean landed usurer. For their part, the poor and the laborers of the Arab Muslim quarters of al-Makkawi, al-Mashahadah, and at-Tayyanah stood shoulder to shoulder with the Kurdish and Aramean peasants against the Arab Muslim landlords....

Estimates of the number of victims varied widely at the time, and ran as high as 5,000, but it is now generally agreed that they were in the hundreds rather than in the thousands.

The second area of conflict concerned the agrarian reform introduced on September 30, 1958. The law was largely mod-

eled on Egyptian land reform implemented in 1952, although the Iraqi law was more moderate. The main objective of the reform was not the destruction of the old landowning class, but rather its neutralization. Moreover, the price of the confiscated lands was too high for the country's poorer peasants to benefit at all from the reform, given that they had no assets as such and were unable to obtain credit. The ICP initially lent its support to the reform, albeit recognizing its conciliatory nature with regard to the old landowning classes, justifying this choice as "necessary" at that particular stage of the revolution. However, the party subsequently turned its attention to the poorer, landless peasants in an attempt to get its own members elected to government, and organized a large-scale campaign against the reform, which led to the emergence of "peasant companies." By May 1959, the Communists controlled more than 60 percent of the approximately thirty-five hundred such peasant companies.

In April 1959, several large-scale demonstrations were organized and led by the ICP, culminating in the May 1 demonstration in Baghdad, in which some three hundred thousand people took to the streets (one million according to the organizers). Allen Dulles, chairman of the CIA in Washington DC, described the situation as "the most dangerous in the world at present." The Iraqi government, after the defeat of the pan-Arab nationalists, went on to repress the Communist-led protest: in May 1959, two articles from the old criminal code were reintroduced that punished those who professed com-

munist ideas with sentences between seven years and life imprisonment. The ICP Politburo performed an immediate about-turn, abandoning its campaigns to get party members into government and against the agrarian reform. The Central Committee subsequently adopted the Politburo's decision in July of that same year. Certain sources claimed that the decisive factor underlying this decision was pressure from Moscow, which appeared worried about Iraqi events, given its own policy of "peaceful coexistence" at that time.

The fact remains that this decision appears to have been the decisive turning point in ICP policy after the revolution; nevertheless, it failed to avoid the onset of conflict in the end, merely postponing it for another four years. During those four years, the influence of the ICP gradually declined, and its mass support and the power it exercised over Iraqi society inexorably diminished. The importance of the decision taken in May 1959, which represented the fulfillment of a complex strategic policy line, is illustrated in the fact that the results of that year's events were still the subject of heated debate within the ICP many years later.

The ICP's about-turn did not stop the government, however: between July and August 1959, hundreds of Communists were arrested, and hundreds of people were beaten, intimidated, and even killed, both ICP members and party sympathizers. In January 1960, the government passed a law legalizing all political parties except for the Communist Party (despite the fact that the ICP had accepted all the govern-

ment's terms, including the proposed changes to its party program, its name, and the composition of its politburo). The government proceeded to make a series of modifications to the agrarian reform that would further worsen the plight of the country's poorer peasants. The ICP's newspapers were outlawed for various periods and in diverse places as of April 1960; in October 1960, the party's major mouthpiece, *Ittihad-ush-Sha'b* (which had been legalized in December 1959), was completely banned. The party's youth organization (with some eighty-four thousand members in spring 1959) was forcibly disbanded by the police in May 1960 (though, by that time, membership had fallen to twenty thousand), and more than two hundred of its leaders were subsequently arrested.

The League of Iraqi Women and the Student Federation, two other ICP-controlled organizations, were also subjected to heavy police repression. Within the context of this anticommunist campaign, some six thousand workers were sacked from their jobs in 1960. Qasim's policy of repression (until his regime was toppled by a coup d'état in February 1963) increasingly aimed to weaken and neutralize Communist power within the country, rather than destroy the party as such. In fact, Communist leaders were never subjected to repressive measures themselves.

Despite this anticommunist campaign, which had begun in May 1959, the ICP continued to give its unconditional support to the government because of, in the words of Amer Abdallah, "the necessity to solidify national unity and support the ruling

leaders in their efforts to protect this republic."

We never called for a radical land reform...because we took into consideration the class nature of the national revolution, and the close ties of the national bourgeoisie to large estates and agricultural wealth.

In fact, the ICP denounced the class struggle as "left-wing extremism"! Then, on December 4, 1959, the party organized a large-scale demonstration on the occasion of Qasim's leaving the hospital (after an assassination attempt the previous October 7), where the party urged the people on with the following rallying calls:

"Hand in Hand with the National Government for the Preservation of Order!" "More Grain for Your People, Brave Peasants!" "Produce More, O Valiant Workers!" "Long Live the Solidarity of the People, the Army, and the Government Under the Leadership of 'Abd-ul-Karim Qasim!"

In the summer of 1961, the Central Committee, led by its secretary ar-Radi, with the clandestine publication of *Ittihad-ush-Sha'b*, condemned the position adopted by the "party right wing" (Amer Abdallah was accused of being an agent of Qasim, whereupon he left Iraq for Bulgaria), although in practice this was merely a tactical maneuver. (In fact, at the same time, the ICP was far more critical of the Kurdish movement than of the government when the latter declared war on the Kurds in September 1961, insinuating that the Kurdish movement concealed imperialist interests.) This was followed by a brief thaw in relations: in December 1961, Qasim annulled drilling concessions granted to oil companies for the unexplored areas of the country and freed all political prisoners.

Then, in May 1962, he had hundreds of others arrested after a demonstration of several thousand people called by the ICP in Baghdad in support of "peace in Kurdistan."

On the eve of the coup d'état in February 1963, which was to eliminate the ICP from the country's political life altogether, the party's membership had fallen from twenty-five thousand in 1959 (in January of that year, the party declared it could not accept any new membership applications due to administrative difficulties!) to fewer than ten thousand, five thousand of whom were based in Baghdad. Above all, it lost the significant position of power it had held four years earlier among the country's young people, trade unions, peasant unions, and the popular militia set up after the July Revolution.

While the July Revolution had destroyed the oligarchic monarchy's power, the problems of land ownership and of the poor peasants remained dramatic. British control over Iraq was destroyed, but the country's oil riches continued to accumulate in the hands of the large multinationals. The revolution had been declared one of universal aims that transcended all class, religious, ethnic, and other differences, but this was soon revealed to be a mere illusion, as the state and country continued to be blighted by fierce social conflict. The "national bourgeoisie" failed to achieve the "bourgeois revolution" it had been assigned by the Communists. Economic and social fragility, characterized by differing views on the land ownership on which the majority of middle-class Iraqis depended and on international market policy, led to the breakup of its political organization, the National Democratic Party, which disap-

peared from the scene between 1961 and 1962. Moreover, the failure of the July Revolution had even worse repercussions in the long term.

The destruction of the popular movement and the dismantling of its various grassroots organizations by the national government meant more than just a temporary interruption of the national/social revolution—it signified the continuation of a policy of violence, started under the colonial state, against any and all popular/subaltern voices of difference.

And it meant that the policy of silencing the opposition through sheer force could be repeated with even greater success in the years to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Nationalist Regimes, 1963–90

On February 8, 1963, a military coup overthrew Qasim's regime (the Iraqi leader surrendered the following day and was immediately executed), and Abdel Salam Aref, former "number two" leader of the July Revolution, was made the new head of state. The Baath Party was the dominant force in the new government coalition. Its ranks provided the prime minister, Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr, and the deputy prime minister, Ali Saleh al-Saadi. Al-Saadi was general secretary of the Baath Party and the real head of the new regime, with control over the National Guard, the party's paramilitary force—whose numbers rose from five thousand to thirty-four thousand between February and August 1963—which would implement governmental repression of Iraq's opposition.

In February 1963, the Baath had only 830 members (of whom 20 percent were workers and 5 percent peasants) together with some fifteen thousand sympathizers. When the coup d'état got underway, the ICP launched an appeal for mobilization with the slogan "To arms! Crush the reactionary, im-

perialist conspiracy!" There were demonstrations in the country's major cities, but, on February 8, Qasim refused to give out arms; the army opened fire on the demonstrators, who at most were armed with sticks, killing hundreds of them. The following day, the Communist resistance was broken essentially everywhere, apart from small pockets of resistance (in particular, in Basra), which managed to hold out until February 12. The Revolutionary Command Committee, in its Bulletin No. 13, wrote:

[T]he commanders of the military units, the police, and the Nationalist Guard are authorized to annihilate anyone that disturbs the peace. The loyal sons of the people are called upon to cooperate with the authorities by informing against these criminals and exterminating them.

In the three-day period from February 8 to February 10, between 1,500 and 5,000 people were killed, including at least 350 Communists. Those quarters of the city where resistance against the coup was strongest were treated as enemy territory, with mass roundups and arrests, massacres, and rapes. The future leader of the left wing of the ICP, Aziz al-Hajj, looking back on those days, claimed that the coup d'état was a "glorious" act by the party that saved it politically, whereas the real mistake was made in 1958-63.

The whole strategy of our party rested on a wrong principle, namely, that, rather than initiating the civil war ourselves, we should avoid it at all costs. At the same time, the other forces ...were sharpening their knives to massacre us at the most suitable moment.

In the months that followed, anticommunist repression

was more severe than ever. Not a single Communist cell managed to escape the attack. Ar-Radi, the party's general secretary, was arrested on February 20, and died after four days of torture. The ensuing two secretaries, Jamal al-Haidari and Muhammad Salih al-Aballi, were arrested on July 21 and executed. During the course of 1963, the Iraqi government killed seven members of the Central Committee (from a total of nineteen), making a total of some 150 such "legal executions" of Communists, while the number of "illegal executions" was much higher. In November 1963, a total of seven thousand Communists were in jail. Party leaders tried to save the greatest possible number of militants by helping them to flee to the countryside or Kurdistan. For a year and a half, the party was virtually inactive, and this period was even worse than that of 1949. The Baath-military coalition, although efficient in repressing Communist opposition, was still highly unstable and characterized by continual internal divisions. Batatu used the words of Dostoyevsky to describe the governmental structure of that time: There is nothing easier than lopping off heads and nothing harder than developing ideas. The Nasserites present in the government were thrown out in May 1963, Iraq broke off relations with Nasser's Egypt the following July, and the war with Kurdistan recommenced in June of that same year (the ICP supported the Kurdish forces and unsuccessfully attempted a surprise attack on the country's major military base at ar-Rashid in July).

The same Baath Party split at its October (pan-Arab) con-

gress, which saw the victory of the "left wing," whose winning slogans were in favor of "socialist planning," "collective farming managed by the peasants themselves," "the workers' democratic control over the means of production," and "a party based essentially on the workers and peasants." In Iraq, the "left wing" was represented by al-Saadi, who proclaimed himself a "Marxist." He was flanked by the National Guard, the Student Federation, and the General Workers' Union. This situation put the army officers and the Baath Party's "right wing," represented by the head of government, al-Bakr, on maximum alert. From November 11 to November 18, a chaotic situation existed in Iraq, with armed military officers intervening at the Baath congress in order to supervise the "right-wing" management of affairs; al-Saadi exiled to Madrid (he subsequently returned to Iraq to set up the Revolutionary Workers' Party, which would have no weight as such); "left-wing" Baath officers bombing the ar-Rashid military base; and the streets of Baghdad in the hands of "left-wing" Baath militants and National Guards. The General Workers' Union demanded the execution of those bourgeoisie who were taking their capital abroad, the immediate nationalization of Iraq's industries, and the collectivization of farming. On November 18, the country saw another coup, led by head of state Abdel Salam Aref together with his brother, Brigade General Abdel Rahman. The headquarters of the National Guard were bombed and order restored in Baghdad.

The regime led by Abdel Salam Aref survived until his acci-

dental death on April 13, 1966. From November 1963 to February 1964, power was shared by a coalition including nationalist military leaders personally faithful to Aref, "right-wing" Baath military leaders, and Nasserite army officers. From February 1964 to August 1964, Nasserite military leaders constituted the leading component of the coalition, while the Baath Party officers were removed from power (and subsequently attempted their own coup). During this period, a joint Presidential Council (with Egypt) was announced, together with the formation of a single party, the Arab Socialist Union, sponsored by the state (based on the Egyptian model); the nationalization of all banks and insurance companies, as well as Iraq's major manufacturing and commercial concerns; and the distribution of 25 percent of profits to the workers. The Nasserite military officers demanded monopoly control of foreign trade, but their allies failed to agree to this, leading to a split from those who supported Aref; the latter subsequently took over power in August (and the Nasserite military made an unsuccessful coup attempt of their own). This brings us to the third phase, which began in August 1964 and ended with the death of Abdel Salam Aref in April 1966. This phase was characterized by a conservative, nationalistic approach that, in a situation of extreme economic uncertainty with the massive flight of capital abroad and large-scale redundancies, tried to partially "rectify" the measures adopted by the Nasserites in spring 1964. This third phase, like the previous two, saw an attempted, albeit unsuccessful, coup d'état.

Upon the death of Abdel Salam Aref, power was taken over by his brother, Abdel Rahman Aref, remained in power until July 1968, continuing in the same political direction as his predecessor. A Baath Party coup deposed him and forced him into luxurious exile in Britain.

In February 1964, a peace agreement was signed in Kurdistan, but fighting began once again the following April and continued until June 1967, when a new peace treaty was signed. After the November 1963 coup d'état, repressive measures against the ICP were relaxed, enabling the party to rebuild slowly and to circulate (internally) handwritten copies of the paper *Tariq-ush-Sha'b*. The rebuilt party was led by a "Committee in Exile for the Organization of the Communist Party," whose members lived in Eastern European states and denounced Aref's regime as a "reactionary military dictatorship."

- Several factors led to a turning point in the ICP's policy, ratified by a clandestine meeting of the Central Committee in Baghdad in August 1964: peace with the Kurds in 1964; events in Egypt (the release of Communist prisoners, the establishment of close ties with the USSR, debate over the self-breakup of the two Egyptian Communist Parties and their merger with Nasser's party, the Arab Socialist Union); and the Nasserite maneuvers in Baghdad (the nationalizations, improvements in relations with the USSR, which began to supply arms to Iraq).
- "Egypt is on the way towards non-capitalistic, socialist development," according to the new "August line," and this called for a

reconsideration of the party line on Arab unity and, in particular, for the admission that the 1958-63 policy regarding this question was open to criticism:

It is erroneous...that Communists should continue to cling to political democracy as a condition for the support of any Arab unity...[The ICP] views the question of Arab unity in the light of the new phenomena emerging on the Arab scene, the phenomena of non-capitalist development and social advance which enrich the progressive content of Arab unity.

With hindsight, the Central Committee thus saw the coup d'état in November 1963 as a positive event, as it

removed the incubus of the fascist regime and "Nationalist Guard"...and created more favorable conditions for the struggle of the anti-imperialist forces to preserve national independence, alter Iraq's official policy and return the country to the caravan of Arab liberation.

The political conclusion:

If we should admit of the possibility of Iraq developing along non-capitalist lines, it would inevitably follow that we could not steer a course toward the conquest of power by our party. We would remain in the vanguard but there are forces which are gradually adopting our aims...at the given stage the best government in Iraq would be a coalition of all the patriot forces fighting for complete emancipation and social progress.

According to the party's left-wing critics:

[C]ooperation with Cairo was viewed as the key to every subsequent revolutionary development in Iraq...and accordingly subordinated the practical policy of the party to the will of Cairo and its partisans in Baghdad.

In August 1964, the Central Committee's plenum elected a new central committee, partly in Iraq and partly abroad, and a

new party secretary, Aziz Muhammad (also known as "Mu'in" or "Nadhim Ali").

Adoption of the "August line" caused considerable indignation among militants, who saw the changes in the party line as merely supporting those "whose hands are stained with the blood of the party and the people." On several occasions, the rank and file ignored the Central Committee's recommendations and acted independently. There was a gradual leftward movement within the party rank and file, and the party's leadership, after unsuccessfully attempting to impose its line using disciplinary measures, implemented a "countermove" in spring and fall of 1965.

With the final disappearance of the Nasserite elements from government ranks and the resumption of hostilities in Kurdistan, the leadership of the ICP adopted the slogan of the "violent struggle" aimed at overthrowing the "dictatorial regime" of Aref and establishing "a provisional national coalition government [with] all the patriotic and anti-imperialist parties and groups [aiming at] a parliamentary constitutional life."

An appeal was made to Nasser to reconsider his relationship with Aref's regime, as Aref had opened the way for British imperialist domination and the oil-industry monopoly. In October 1965, an enlarged Central Committee held a clandestine meeting. The following month, in Prague, it was the turn of the "Organizational Committee in Exile," whose order of the day included the question of the conquest of power by the party, given the failings of Aref's regime and its severely

limited social base. During the meeting in Iraq, the historic leader of the party's right wing, Amer Abdallah ("Akram"), was the major supporter of "decisive action," whereas Baha-ud-Din Nuri ("Yaser") argued against it, pointing to the passivity of the majority of people and the unfavorable international situation. The majority of the Central Committee approved the position taken by Akram and passed a resolution affirming:

It is necessary to lay emphasis once more upon the mode of struggle which the party has adopted and which is based on the decisive role of "H" [i.e., "Hashim," the underground name of the section of the party in the Armed Forces] in the overthrow of the ruling power. "H" will be supported by other revolutionary measures that the party will take and by the enlivening of popular action in the various fields.

The debate within the Organizational Committee in Exile (in the presence of the secretary) ended with the adoption of a "middle way" between the two positions in question. The final document incorporated the points submitted by Aziz al-Hajj's left wing concerning the need to prepare for "civil war," and those of Zaki Khairi on the need for partisan struggle in rural Arab areas. However, as far as the immediate task at hand was concerned, the prevailing voice proved to be that of the moderate Abdul Karim Ahmad ad-Daud. He saw preparations for popular insurrection and "civil war" as a "strategic" task to which the party needed to be "seriously" and "firmly" committed, but added that such preparations were not the party's "immediate priority." The left wing of the party, on the other hand, pledged its support for guerrilla warfare, along Chinese and Cuban lines, and denounced (albeit in a very toned-down man-

ner) Moscow's support for the Iraqi government while criticizing ICP policy since 1959. In the words of Zaki Khairi:

Why was the question of a people's revolution by the toiling classes avoided?...The trouble is that the leading comrades at the party center do not want to orient the party seriously toward power. The non-class point of view (which won through in 1959) has struck roots...No serious account is taken of the Kurdish revolution...there is a flaming Kurdish question, and at the same time a peasant question that we can inflame...But the party dismisses [any] suggestions because there is no serious tendency toward power...Without waging a struggle against the rightist ideas of the leadership, the revolutionary line cannot prevail...If such mentality predominates, the party cannot be directed in a serious manner toward the organization of armed resistance against the existing regime.

Given such criticisms, the final resolution adopted was a wonderful balancing act:

We do not subscribe to the view which asserts the need to close the door to the idea of an "independent action by the party"...we point out that the formulation of this idea is the manifestation of a new, very noticeable trend in the party's policy. The idea ought to be discussed very carefully; and there is no justification for accusing those who are yet unconvinced of it of dissidence and cowardice.

At the time, the ICP had five thousand members, not one of whom was an army officer, and virtually no roots in the country's rural areas.

From October 1965 onward, the ICP continued its radical criticism of the regime led first by Abdel Salam Aref and then by his brother, despite the favorable judgment of the Iraqi government offered by both Moscow and the Lebanese Communist Party. However, not until February 1967 did the ICP

decide to organize small armed units, both stationary and mobile, in rural areas and in various cities throughout the country, and to launch guerrilla activity against the government. The left wing's critique and this late, circumscribed guerrilla warfare together managed to keep the various ICP factions united, but in June 1967, the Arab nations' defeat by Israel was seen as a watershed, the end of an historical epoch, one that brushed aside any semblance of Communist unity. On September 17, 1967, a considerable portion of the ICP split from the party to form the Iraqi Communist Party-Central Command.

In the early 1960s, a Maoist group had formed within the ranks of the ICP, though the major exponent of this line was expelled from the party and any other exponents of the Maoist school of thought were kept out. Dissension reemerged (and in fact exploded) in protest against the "August line." The major dissident was Aziz al-Hajj Ali Haidar, a Communist veteran who had joined the ICP in 1946, spent the years between 1948 and 1958 in prison, and, on his release, joined the ICP's Central Committee. In January 1967, he was appointed secretary of the Baghdad ICP, and the following month he was elected to the party's Politburo. Al-Hajj founded the "revolutionary board," an internal grouping that struggled in vain to establish internal party democracy, then led the split in the ICP in September 1967.

The ICP-Central Command refused to side with China or the USSR, and called for the arming of the masses and for the organization of an armed popular revolution in both the cities and the countryside. It fought for a "popular democratic revo-

lutionary regime led by the working classes," for "revolutionary Arab unity of a socialist kind," and for "the destruction of the state of Israel and the creation of a democratic Arab-Jewish state." A significant minority of party members (approximately five thousand) went with the new organization.

In June 1968, the ICP-Central Command positively evaluated the guerrilla warfare that had been conducted for two years in Southern Iraq by a "Guevarist" group led by Khalid Ahmad Zaki (who was subsequently killed by the army). It proceeded to form its own armed units in Baghdad during the course of 1968, the "Popular Army" led by Mu'in al-Nahar (another Communist veteran later killed in a shoot-out on the outskirts of Baghdad).

In February 1969, all members of the ICP's Politburo were arrested. Two of the five died under torture, while the other three (including party secretary al-Hajj) agreed to collaborate with the Baath Party, providing it with the names of their comrades and intervening in public on its behalf. (Al-Hajj subsequently became an Iraqi diplomat based in Paris.)

The ICP-Central Command managed to reorganize one year later, this time under the leadership of Ibrahim Allawi, in Kurdish territory (with a further split in its ranks, giving rise to the "Marxist-Leninist Party"). It established a "strategic alliance" with Barzani's KDP, at that time the only Kurdish nationalist organization, a bourgeois party. The defeat of the Kurds in 1975 and the destruction of the KDP further damaged the much-weakened ICP-Central Command. In 1975, the party's five main leaders were arrested and executed at Su-

laimaniya. This would prove to be a fatal blow to the ICP-Central Command. Some of its remaining leaders wanted to wind up the party, while others decided to form the ICP-Rank-and-File Union. Many of its militants ceased all political activity, while the small surviving units disappeared from political life toward the end of the 1970s.

The ICP (that is, the ICP-Central Committee, as it was known from 1967 on in order to distinguish it from the splinter group) called an emergency national conference after the split (the third split in its history) for the month of December 1967. During this conference, party members reaffirmed the need to build united democratic fronts with a goal of setting up a coalition government to replace the regime led by Abdel Rahman Aref. Despite the conference's pledge of support to the USSR and Egypt, Moscow did not particularly appreciate this, and, after only two months, closed the ICP's radio station, "The Voice of the Iraqi People," which transmitted from Prague via relays in Bulgaria.

The Baath Party and the armed forces were behind another coup d'état on July 17, 1968, and Abdel Rahman Aref was forced into exile. Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr became the new head of state, while many of Aref's colleagues took part in the coup, thus keeping their posts. Two weeks later, on July 30, there was another coup, this time eliminating Aref's old colleagues and keeping only Baathists in power, subsequently organized into a "Revolutionary Command Council" that monopolized all political power (the subsequent government was given only "administrative" duties). This power structure remained un-

changed for decades. Together with al-Bakr, the new figure of power to emerge within Iraqi politics was Saddam Hussein. During the chaotic 1970s, Hussein succeeded in becoming a key figure on the Revolutionary Command Council, eliminating all other challengers. In February 1979, he got al-Bakr dismissed as head of state, promptly taking his place.

The Baath Party immediately sought support from the ICP-Central Committee, proceeding to free certain political prisoners in September 1968 and offering the Communists ministerial posts. Initially, the ICP-Central Committee refused this offer, demanding peace in Kurdistan, a constituent assembly, and the reestablishment of civil liberties (the legalization of political parties, democratic elections, etc.). However, from 1969 (the year in which the Baathist Iraqi government signed important oil contracts with the USSR) on, ICP-Central Committee entered into negotiations with the Baath Party that enabled it to legally publish its "monthly of general news and interest," *al-Thaqafa al-Jadida*. In addition, the ICP was asked to be part of a "National Progressive Front," in which it would hold no particular powers and would have to recognize its complete subordination to the Baath Party. Negotiations continued until spring 1970; then the Baathists broke off talks and proceeded to arrest hundreds of Communists and "discreetly" murder a number of them or have them "disappear."

The ICP held its second congress in September 1970 from its clandestine stronghold in Iraqi Kurdistan. The final report recognized the positive actions of the Baath in the economic and social fields, together with its anti-imperialist and anti-

Zionist stances, but continued to criticize it for the total lack of democratic freedom within Iraq. Relations between the Communists and the Baath Party improved in the fall of 1971, and they became closer after the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company and the "solid strategic alliance" between Baghdad and Moscow. In general, the Baath spent this entire period (1968-72) dangling illusive carrots before the ICP: periods of discussion and pacification were followed by periods of violent repression, both covert and blatant. One common practice at that time was the arrest of rank-and-file militants, their torture at police stations, followed by their release a few days later. There were also cases of murder of party leaders during the periods of "opening up" and "negotiation." At the same time, Baghdad had introduced a new land reform (1970) that was much more radical than anything the ICP had demanded; a new labor code that established strong rights for workers (although it severely limited the right to strike and banned free trade unions); the above-mentioned nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company; the monopoly of foreign trade; an alliance with the USSR; and an anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist international position in support of the more radical schools of thought in the Palestinian movement.

In April 1972 (by which time "only" fifty Communists remained in prison), the ICP declared that "recent developments have marked a turning point in the people's struggle" and stated that it was ready to enter the National Progressive Front. The following month, two Communists (including the ever-present Amer Abdallah) were appointed members of the

Iraqi government. However, it was not until July 1973 that the ICP finally entered the National Progressive Front, with the signing of a "National Action Charter" and legalization of the party and its daily newspaper. A new period began in 1972-73, during which the ICP depicted Saddam Hussein as the Iraqi Fidel Castro (although he saw himself more as a Salvador Allende in his "front-line battle against imperialism"), as the Baath Party's man of the Left closest to the ICP's own political line. In February 1974, the ICP closed all its independent (necessarily illegal) workplace organizations. It supported the actions of the Baathists, including the bloody war perpetrated against the Kurdish people in 1974-75.

The agreement with Iran, which in the end enabled the Iraqi government to defeat the Kurdish forces in 1975, constituted the move that gave Saddam Hussein the power to begin his attack on his Communist allies, since he no longer depended so much on their support. Moreover, during the four years since 1972, the Baathists had fully exploited the acquiescence of the Communists in order to gain almost total control of the trade unions, the peasant unions, and other mass organizations. A series of arrests of Communist militants resumed at the end of 1975; as of spring 1976, the ICP's activities were subjected to a series of restrictions.

The party held its third congress in Baghdad in May 1976. On the one hand, this congress reaffirmed the classical position whereby "the national-democratic revolution has entered a new radical phase, the phase of non-capitalistic development." On the other hand, it pointed out that "capitalistic rela-

tions of production" were expanding in the countryside and that, within the period of non-capitalistic development (to be distinguished from the period of transition to socialism), private capital has an important role to play and may risk precipitating the situation backwards toward one of imperialistic subordination (the Egyptian example, with Sadat's abrupt breaking off of relations with the USSR a few years earlier). Furthermore, the congress condemned (albeit it in a conciliatory, constructive tone) the limitation of political action and agreed on the need to return to the original thinking of the National Progressive Front, against the breakup of mass organizations led by the Communists (such as the Democratic Youth Federation, the General Federation of Students, and the League of Iraqi Women). From that moment on, the Baathists launched an increasingly violent anticommunist crusade.

By the beginning of 1978, it was only a question of time before the ICP and the Baath Party ended their alliance; in fact, in March 1978, it was announced that twelve Communists had been executed for conducting non-Baathist political activity within the armed forces. In May, a law was passed whereby any non-Baathist political activity (such as reading a Communist paper) by a member or former member of the armed forces was punishable by death. In a country where military service is compulsory, this was equivalent to condemning to death any adult male who had relations with Communists. During the summer and fall of 1978, numerous people were arrested, tortured, and, in fact, condemned to death. Relations between the Baath and Communist Parties were broken off in

April 1979, resulting in the subsequent clandestine status of members of the latter. In July 1979, the Central Committee voted in favor of an extremely short-sighted document that contained not a single word of self-criticism:

[O]ur party has fought with all its might to prevent the worsening of the crisis afflicting the country. Showing great responsibility towards its people, it has made enormous efforts to get the regime to implement policies reflecting the people's interests... The bloody violence our party has had to face reflects the Baath leaders' concern over the existence of a Communist Party... that exercises its political and ideological independence... All of the arguments fabricated by the Baath leadership in order to justify their criminal campaign against our party have crumbled, a political and moral defeat for them, while at the same time our party's unity and its influence among the masses has been consolidated.

For the third time (after 1949 and 1963), the back of the ICP was broken by the regime's repressive measures. Not one party structure was left standing in Arab Iraq, and the party now only operated from Iraqi Kurdistan, as had been the case with the ICP-Central Command when the very same ICP contributed, as an ally of the Baath government, to its military destruction. It is estimated that between twenty thousand and thirty thousand people were arrested in the period 1979-81 (thousands of whom were subsequently detained), while hundreds "disappeared" or were killed.

In June 1980, the ICP defined the Iraqi regime as one of "bureaucratic state capitalism," and in November of that same year it formed an alliance (albeit with certain misgivings) with the KDP. In September 1980, Iraq attacked Iran during the

middle of the latter's Islamic revolution (the Shah had fallen from power the year before). In 1981, the ICP opted for armed struggle. It claimed that "the military operations conducted from Iraqi Kurdistan are an essential part of the struggle" against Saddam Hussein's regime, and that these same military operations ought to be conducted from bases in the Iraqi countryside without making any serious attempt to set up cells and armed detachments in the larger Iraqi cities, starting with Baghdad, during the entire 1980s.

The vast number of army deserters was concentrated in southern Iraq, where according to certain sources some twenty thousand soldiers had fled in 1983. That same year, Baghdad ordered the continual blanket bombing of the entire area, killing thousands of people. About three thousand deserters survived, subsequently getting involved in guerrilla warfare against the regime. This number was to fall to just a few hundred during the following years.

As the war with Iran shifted onto Iraqi soil, and Baghdad, from summer 1982 onward, claimed it to be an exclusively defensive war, the ICP maintained its political line, whereby Iraq itself was perceived as the main cause of the bloodbath at the front. The party invited Iraqi soldiers to desert and use their arms against the oppressive regime in Baghdad. This position—which contrasted with the Soviet position, as the USSR began to furnish the Iraqi regime with arms once again in 1983—was hotly debated within the party. At the fourth congress, held in November 1985, it led to the expulsion of those who called for people to "defend the nation" and to reject the

"defeatist stance of the leadership." ("[Y]ou cannot ask soldiers to shoot at the regime when they are defending their country.")

At its 1985 congress, the ICP reexamined the policy followed from the early 1970s and criticized the abandonment of the party's political, ideological, and organizational independence vis-à-vis the Baath Party, which, among other things, enabled the latter to implement its terrible policy of political repression from 1978 on. Those who were expelled from the party described this as an "extreme left-wing" position and, for their part, called for the establishment of a democratic government in Iraq without making any reference to the overthrow of the existing regime. The excluded militants went on to form a group based in Damascus, which published its own magazine, *Communist Tribune*. This group broke up after only a few years, and its members came to an agreement with the Baath Party that enabled them to return to Baghdad.

The ICP suffered a serious military attack in May 1983, when the Turkish army and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK—the second most important Kurdish nationalist organization, founded in 1975) attacked their headquarters at Jalamerk in Kurdistan, and more than sixty people were killed.

During the course of the 1980s, a number of small, extreme left-wing groups were formed. One was a Trotskyist group called the Permanent Revolution, set up between the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s by former Baath militants. (Another similar group, calling itself Trotsky-

ist and made up of former Baath members, had been set up in the 1960s—the Workers' Organization. Also during the 1970s, an Iraqi freelance journalist and Trotskyist, Kanan Makiya, aliases "Muhammad Ja'far" and "Samir al-Khalil," became a well-known figure in various magazines, although he later repented and became famous in the English-speaking world for adopting the most extremist of American government theories and for his vulgar attacks on the Arab world's political left wing. Then there was a Maoist group called the Workers' Vanguard and a third grouping called Independent Struggle. These groups, each of which had no more than thirty active members, operated purely on the theoretical level and in offering help to militants threatened by repressive measures. They would slowly disappear during the course of the decade.

The war with Iran ended in 1988 without the popular insurrection the ICP leadership had been expecting. The regime's appeal to "defend the nation" was favorably received by the people of Iraq, the number of army deserters fell to almost zero during the final years of the war, and the army failed to turn its guns on the government. During the course of military operations in Iraqi Kurdistan in the spring of 1988, the majority of the ICP's military bases were closed and the party's headquarters moved to Damascus. The Communist Party leadership acknowledged the failure of its previous policies with regard to both the expected revolt among the military ranks and the central importance given to the armed struggle. This self-criticism focused not on the particular

choice of armed struggle (rural bases, no city-based cells), but on the armed struggle *tout court*. The ICP found itself stranded and, in its desperate search for a way out, chose to come to an agreement with the Baath regime. Absent for years from the major cities of Baghdad, Basra, and Mosul, and blind to the extreme weakness of the regime and the growing unrest among the Iraqi population, the ICP found itself with the dilemma of signing an agreement with the Baathists while at the same time saving face. The ICP leadership stipulated certain terms to any agreement: public negotiations with the Baathist regime preceded by a gesture of good faith, such as the release of political prisoners. Zaki Khairi (who in 1985 had agreed with the line adopted by the *Communist Tribune* but had remained in the ICP nevertheless) tried nonetheless to organize a conciliatory maneuver with respect to the regime, with the public, highly publicized return to Baghdad of the Communist leaders in the presence of European MPs and journalists. A sharp halt was put to all these maneuvers, however, with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990.

The Iraqi Communist Party suffered two particularly brutal waves of repression: the first in 1963 and the second in 1979. In both cases, however, it had somehow managed to survive and reorganize its forces, and to present itself once again as an important political organization within the ranks of the opposition to the nationalistic regimes, thus revealing both a considerable degree of vitality and its undeniable popular support among the Iraqi working classes. During the periods following these

waves of violent repression, the party was forced to question itself on the failure of previous policy, which was clear from the party's total incapacity to counter the repression with a clandestine transformation capable of saving at least some of the ICP's militant structures. This internal self-questioning and debate lasted from 1965 to 1967 in the first case, leading to the left-wing split from the party of the ICP- Central Command; in the second case, it went on throughout 1985, leading to the right-wing split of the *Communist Tribune* group. Nevertheless, these painful processes failed to prevent the repetition of similar mistakes over the years. For example, the political suicide concerning relations with the Baath regime during the 1970s is in some way similar to the likewise suicidal policies adopted during the Qasim years. Also, the right-wing shift in the party in 1989-90 was not merely the result of external factors, namely the invasion of Kuwait and the terrible Gulf War of 1991. What could the underlying logic have been?

The strategic approach that influenced the ICP's choices until 1963 was that of the "two-stage revolution": a necessary "bourgeois revolution" prior to any "socialist" struggle. The bourgeois revolution would aim for independence from imperialism through the cutoff of all existing colonial and neocolonial relations; the abolition of feudal and neofeudal relations in the countryside; industrial development led by the "industrial bourgeoisie," whose interests differed from those of the "comprador"; democratic rights and a constitutional state based on law and respect for that law. This bourgeois revolution had to

be led, naturally enough, by the "national bourgeoisie," which was synonymous with the "industrial bourgeoisie." The contradictions and consequences of this strategic plan were seen in the actions of the ICP during the period 1958-63. The coup d'état in February 1963 was seen as a step backward (leading to the formation of a "fascist regime") from the correct path followed by Qasim. However, first the left-wing shift in the Baath Party in October 1963, then the even more influential nationalization program carried out in July 1964 dealt a death blow to Communist generalizations. While the former of these two changes may be judged simply as a lower-middle-class adventure (with the demand for the socialization of companies), rather like the personal actions of Abdel Salam Aref during the summer of 1958, the nationalization program eliminated the core of the very social class designated to carry out the "bourgeois revolution."

One interpretation of this situation had already been given in 1956 with regard to Nasser's Egypt: it was seen as a "non-capitalistic path to development." (In 1964, Nikita Khrushchev indeed defined Nasser's Egypt as a "socialist state," and the two Egyptian Communist Parties folded in 1965 to join up with the single Nasserite party, after the Algerian Communist Party had entered the National Liberation Front two years earlier.) This unusual social formation, in the formulations proposed by Moscow and the Middle Eastern Communists, had rather undefined characteristics, and the judgment of the Communists varied depending on the political situation and the interests of Soviet foreign policy. Thus it was that the in-

ternal point of reference changed: between 1964 and 1970, it was Nasser; between 1972 and 1978, Saddam Hussein; and from 1980 on, the Syrian leader Hafez al-Assad. Communist behavior was astutely summarized by the left wing of the ICP, which claimed that it saw

[the] cooperation with Cairo...as the key to every...revolutionary development in Iraq...and accordingly subordinated the practical policy of the party to the will of Cairo and its partisans in Baghdad.

This was generally true throughout the Middle East, when Baghdad took the place of Cairo, or when Damascus subsequently replaced Baghdad. In all these passages, the strategic approach remained much the same, despite the incredible series of defeats suffered by Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. The difference was that the "non-capitalistic approach" automatically became "state capitalism" as soon as the ruling power broke off relations with the Communists and the USSR. The common feature of both the old and new strategic approaches was that the situation was not ready for policy that went against middle-class interests. So, on the one hand, the ICP let the Nasserites and the Baath Party "overtake it on the left" on numerous occasions, while, on the other, it completely failed to target the Iraqi state and its one (and only) true cornerstone, the armed forces, for destruction. Even when faced with the option of "taking over power" in 1965, the party underlined the need to win over a section of Iraq's army officers in order that they could then carry out a "progressive" military coup. In the meantime, democratic economic development, which was to

be the outcome of first the "bourgeois revolution," then the "non-capitalistic path," was still sadly lacking. Both of these plans were blind alleys.

Social classes and the state during the nationalist regimes

The period from February 1963 to July 1968 was marked by a never-ending series of coups, some successful, many others not. After July 1968, a similar series of plots and attempted coups threatened the power of the Baath Party, all of which failed and were punished with periodic waves of executions. These coups d'état were often seen simply as representing everyday governmental turnover, with the exception of the February 1963 coup, and not as changing anything at the base of state power, that is, within the armed forces. The two Baath coups in 1968 (on July 17 and July 30) did not even necessitate a curfew or the use of force, and the Iraqi people remained totally indifferent to this umpteenth overturning of power within army ranks. However, while the structure of the state remained unchanged, from the 1958 Revolution to the 1990-91 Gulf War, the structure of Iraqi society underwent a series of deep-rooted changes as a result of land reform, nationalization, and voluntary and forced migration and emigration.

The working class definitely grew in number considerably during the course of those years. Estimates vary significantly (the workforce in Iraq in 1977 has been estimated at around three million people, of whom one-third were "working class").

The composition of this working class changed considerably due to several factors: state intervention in the economy (though the majority of workers continued to earn their living from the private sector—55 percent in 1977); migration from rural areas to towns and cities (one million people entered the urban labor market during the 1970s, most from rural areas); immigration (from Egypt, Morocco, and southern Asia—in 1977, there were at least 300,000 such immigrants; in 1984, the number was estimated at around two million); military mobilization in the 1980s, involving a significant percentage of female workers (25 percent of the total in the mid-1980s); the destruction caused by the Iran-Iraq War; and the deportation of Kurds and Shiites from southern Iraq (in the early 1980s, between 250,000 and 400,000 people were deported to Iran!).

For two decades, Iraq's workforce benefited from a situation of almost full employment, with the 1971 Employment Code basically guaranteeing job security. The standard of living and social welfare improved considerably during this period. All schooling was provided free, and towns and cities managed to offer decent housing to the massive influx of migrating workers. Real wages improved—although, overall, the country's oil wealth was mainly channeled into profits, unearned income, and interest. (Between 1968 and 1978, the percentage of national product accounted for by wages fell from 28 percent to 19 percent.) After the coup in February 1963, all independent trade-union activity had been banned; the only legal unions were those set up by the state and controlled by the functionaries of the major government party. Under

Baathist rule, workers were also granted a certain representation on company boards, although the party, rather than the workers, chose the workers' representatives. Between 1965 and 1968, working-class political activity reemerged in the form of a series of strikes in the building, textile, and food industries. After the 1968 coup, the Baath Party celebrated its coming to power by getting special units to shoot at striking workers, and in 1969–70, demonstrations and strikes were met with force, with numerous arrests and deaths among the protesting workers. The fact that the ICP moved closer to the Baath Party and eventually joined the government forces, the profound changes in the labor market and in the possibilities for improving one's standard of living thanks to state intervention, and the tight organization of the masses by the Baath regime all contributed to the virtual disappearance of any working-class action during the 1970s. This inactivity substantially continued into the 1980s, when Iraq was governed by a regime that terrorized the masses and led the country into war against Iran.

The situation was much worse in rural Iraq than in the cities: in the south, the majority of houses were without electricity or running water, and the rate of growth of per capita income was half that of the cities between 1970 and 1977. It has been estimated that midway through the 1970s, 14 percent of the rural population was undernourished.

At the beginning of the 1980s, the national health service was gradually privatized, but the standard of living of the civilian population did not worsen until the end of the 1980s.

During the war with Iran, the regime in Baghdad managed to keep control of the domestic situation, thanks to a continual flow of loans from the Gulf states, which led to an increase in Iraq's foreign debt from two billion dollars in 1980 to eighty billion dollars in 1987 (combined with war damage estimated at sixty-seven billion dollars).

In 1987, the Baathist regime abolished the Employment Code. As a result, Iraqi workers began to experience indiscriminate layoffs and unemployment, with two hundred thousand soldiers demobilized after the war with Iran ended in 1988. Moreover, the pension and social welfare laws were abolished, and all trade-union organizations were outlawed once again. The latter measure did not extend to those private companies with more than fifty employees (covering a total of eight thousand workers), but this concession proved to be a double-edged weapon for the nation's workers. Given the presence of demobilized soldiers and the possibility of importing foreign workers without restrictions, manufacturers and private agricultural concerns proceeded to replace between 40 percent and 80 percent of their workforces. In 1988, an increase in the number of working days and in workloads led to a 20 percent increase in "productivity."

This attack on the living standards of the workforce could not be maintained for very long. In 1989, the regime took measures to partially improve the workers' lot: wages were increased, the prices of government products and services were frozen, and the profits accumulated by public and joint public-private companies were reduced. However, trade-union organi-

zations remained banned.

The main processes characterizing Iraq during this period in its history were the nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company in June 1972; the introduction of state control of foreign trade; the process of urbanization; and the state of "permanent war," first against the Kurds, then against Iran. Military expenditure rose from 30 percent of gross national product (GNP) in 1975–79 to 60 percent in 1980–86. As a result of nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company and the increase in production and prices, per capita GNP rose tenfold between 1967 and 1982 (although market trends led to the halving of per capita oil revenue from 1982 to 1989, which in turn meant a similar reduction in per capita GNP, from \$1,675 to \$1,090 at constant prices). The contribution by the oil industry leveled out at around 60 percent of GNP and basically constituted the country's exports (98 percent). Thanks to the financial flows deriving from the oil industry, total state investment rose from 72 million dinars in 1968 to 1.2 billion dinars in 1975.

The manufacturing sector, which had been stagnant under Qasim, despite his clear policy of supporting the manufacturing bourgeoisie, was "hit" by large-scale nationalization in 1964. In July of that year, not only all banks and insurance companies, but also the thirty-two largest industrial and commercial enterprises were nationalized (and private investment "ceilings" were established). These measures meant that the state absorbed one-third of the manufacturing industry's contribution to GNP. After a period of chaos subsequent to the introduction of the nationalization program, the following years

were characterized by gradually increasing industrial growth. There was significant growth after nationalization of the Iraq Petroleum Company in 1972, with the investment of some of the new financial resources in the industrial sector. This situation is illustrated by the figures available for the various industrial companies with more than ten employees (excluding the oil companies): while some 48,000 employees worked for private companies in 1960, only 22,000 worked in state-owned companies; after implementation of the nationalization program, the number of employees in the private sector fell to 39,000, while those employed in state-owned companies rose to 42,000. The former figure remained more or less stable until 1982 (rising slightly to 45,000, an average of 35 employees per company), whereas, in the state-owned sector, the number continued to rise, reaching 145,000 by 1982 (an average of 510 employees per company).

State-owned industry continued to expand during the 1980s, accounting for as much as 98 percent of all existing capital assets, 96 percent of the employed population, and 84 percent of total production. The private sector, which had survived during the course of the 1960s and 1970s and displayed considerable vitality in keeping pace with the expanding state-owned industrial sector—significantly aided by oil funding (the private industrial sector's share remained stable between 1970 and 1982; indeed its share of profits even increased)—declined rapidly between 1981 and 1982, with its share of industrial added value falling from 45 percent in 1982 to 19 percent in 1987.

In February 1987, Saddam Hussein launched an "administrative revolution" designed to "reduce the powers of the bureaucracy"; forty-seven large-scale manufacturers were privatized, all limitations on private investment were abolished, and a series of measures were introduced in support of private investment. This privatization program continued the following year, culminating in a true boom during the summer of 1988. Saddam Hussein managed to privatize much more in the space of eighteen months than Sadat had in Egypt over ten years. The relationship between the private and public manufacturing sectors was not radically modified, however, given that the public sector continued to predominate, thanks to the presence of large, highly capitalized industries (chemical, steel, etc.).

The one sector that benefited most from public investment during the 1970s and 1980s was the construction industry. One-quarter of investment was channeled into infrastructures, against three-quarters into buildings, most of which were concentrated in Baghdad. In 1977, the manufacturing workforce accounted for 8 percent of the total workforce in Iraq, whereas the construction industry accounted for more than 10 percent of that same total. In 1981, the contribution to value added made by the construction industry exceeded the combined contribution of industry and agriculture together (17 percent against 16 percent—and both wages and profits were much higher in the construction sector than they were in industry). Employment was also greater in the construction industry than it was in the industrial sector. The contribution made by private capital (to value added) in the construction industry

stood at 94 percent in 1982 and was still extremely high (80 percent) in 1987. One-half of all private companies operating in the Iraqi economy at the beginning of the 1980s (i.e., in the industrial, construction, transport, service, and commercial sectors) were concentrated in the construction industry, which absorbed 57 percent of total invested capital (followed by the food and textile industries).

As far as the countryside was concerned, the 1958 land reform was made more radical by the reforms introduced in 1970 and 1975. These reforms did not give rise to the establishment of small-scale farms, but to the inclusion (albeit partial) of rural Iraq in the capitalist market. The power of the old landowning classes, personified in the figure of the sheikh, together with the neofeudal system of land ownership and management that bound Iraqi peasants to the land through tribal ties, was effectively destroyed. In their place, rural Iraq saw the emergence of a capitalist class of wage-earning farmers, although the overall system of farming remained somewhat backward.

Iraq covers an area of 173 million *dunum* (434,000 km²), of which approximately thirty million *dunum* were cultivatable in 1958, 23.3 million of these privately owned. Regarding the system of land ownership, the most significant wave of land requisition was seen under the Qasim regime, following the introduction of the first land reform. Approximately six million *dunum* of land were requisitioned from about two thousand sheikhs and other large landowners, who at that time owned some fourteen million *dunum* of land, or 59 percent of all privately owned land. It should be pointed out, however, that the

sheikhs and other large landowners kept the best land for themselves, together with control of the irrigation canals and ownership of most of the nation's farm machinery. During the regimes led by successive Aref brothers, between 1964 and 1968, increasingly less land was requisitioned; this process was reversed from 1970 on, following the two new land reforms. In fact, these reforms brought about the requisition of a quantity of land similar to that immediately following the 1958 reform. However, the redistribution of land during this entire period proceeded at a slower pace: during Qasim's leadership, only 20 percent of requisitioned land was redistributed, and during the years that followed, the quantity of land held by the state gradually grew, from 31 percent of all farmland in 1966, to 37 percent in 1974, and 47 percent in 1989.

The redistribution of land was carried out in favor of the wealthier peasant farmers. At the end of 1971, eighteen months after the enactment of the second land reform, 50 percent of landowning farmers owned less than 8 percent of all farmland, averaging 1.5 hectares a head. (In 1958, 62 percent had owned 2 percent of all land.) At the other extreme, 0.4 percent of landowning farmers owned 17 percent of all land, averaging some 450 hectares a head. (In 1958, 3 percent owned 73 percent of the land, a share that fell to 31 percent by 1971.) Between these two extremes, the remaining 49.6 percent of landowning farmers possessed an average of fifteen hectares each. This meant that the vast majority of those 300,000 "landowning farmers" who owned fewer than 4 hectares of land (fewer than 2 hectares in the majority of cases) had to re-

sort to wage labor to survive. They had to arrange for their families to emigrate to the cities and towns and, in the end, to sell their land, given that it was not enough to guarantee their subsistence. (Moreover, they had no machinery, no access to credit, and, in some cases, not even the necessary animals with which to farm the land!) A great many of the other 300,000 landowning farmers, each of whom possessed between 4 and 150 hectares (an average of 15 hectares a head), had to look for paid work, setting up semicapitalist enterprises in the case of smaller farms (10 to 20 hectares) and resorting to seasonal work, or setting up proper capitalist enterprises in the case of larger farms.

This extension of capitalism into the rural areas of Iraq is confirmed by the fact that at the beginning of the 1970s an unprecedented wave of emigration away from the countryside toward the towns and cities occurred. In 1971, there were approximately 590,000 landowning farmers. This figure subsequently fell to 475,000, where most who left the rural areas clearly possessed extremely small plots of land, a process that benefited the nation's medium-sized farms. The rural workforce fell from 1.5 million in 1973 to less than one million in 1977, that is, from 50 percent to 30 percent of Iraq's total workforce. This was an exodus of almost biblical proportions if the farmers' families who also moved to the towns and cities to look for work are taken into account, all within the space of a few years. In the countryside, the policy of the state and the farm enterprises was to recruit foreign laborers, mostly Egyptian, who were granted virtually no social rights, were under-

paid, and could be blackmailed easily. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptian workers were attracted to the Iraqi countryside to bolster the numbers of the rural proletariat.

The above reflections regard privately owned Iraqi farmland—i.e., 53 percent of all available farmland. The remaining 47 percent, owned by the state, could be rented to farmers free of restrictions (as of 1983) regarding the size of individual plots, at particularly advantageous prices. The major beneficiaries of this situation were high-ranking state functionaries and governing party members, thanks to the ready access they had to capital and personal connections with the state apparatus. As a result, in 1989, some 60 percent of all arable land (fourteen million dunum given over to cereals) was cultivated, either as owned or rented land, by large-scale private farmers. This reconcentration of land ownership and use is symbolized by the Bunniya family, who apart from owning thirty-six large companies also owned or rented some 4,500 hectares of land.

What conclusions can be drawn regarding Iraq's bourgeoisie? The oil industry was completely in the hands of the state, as was a large percentage of manufacturing. The private share of value added in the transport sector oscillated significantly, reaching 60 percent in 1987, while the state controlled about 40 percent of commerce and 80 percent of the construction industry in the same year. All banks and insurance companies were state-controlled. Excluding the oil industry, public administration, and national defense, the private sector's contribution to GNP stood at 58 percent in 1975, 60 percent in 1980, and 64 percent in 1982 (the year in

which the weight of private capital peaked). The figures can be misleading, however. The public sector includes private farm cooperatives, which suffered an irreversible decline from 1983 on; if they were not considered "public," then the 60 percent of 1980 would become 68 percent, and the 64 percent of 1982 would become 72 percent. The relative weight of private capital continued to decline until 1987, before increasing once again between 1987 and 1989 (as a result of the enormous contribution made by the construction industry, which had become more important than both agriculture and manufacturing combined).

The middle class in Iraq, a relatively small class (the upper middle class has been estimated to consist of approximately three thousand families), excluded for the most part from industry, is characterized by both financial and physical insecurity. It prospers in those sectors where it depends directly on the state as its customer (in the construction industry, for example) or where state intervention is of vital importance in obtaining land or cheap loans (in agribusiness). As such, the Iraqi Left has defined it as the "parasitical bourgeoisie." The middle class derives in the main from the lower and middle layers of the old bourgeoisie of the 1960s. Its relations with the ruling powers oscillate between cooperation and conflict, depending on the resources that the state makes available. (The state controls the majority of the nation's surplus, thus state expenditure is the foremost source of demand in Iraq.) However, it does not constitute the foundation of Baath power, which remains the country's bureaucracy and armed forces.

Iraq's public administration experienced a veritable boom as a result of the nationalist regimes and the country's oil revenue. Its nonproductive public employees increased in number from 20,000 in 1958, to 350,000 in 1968, and to 550,000 in 1978 (plus 200,000 people permanently employed in the armed forces, a figure that shot up during the war against Iran in the 1980s). Of these 500,000 public employees, a good 180,000 are employed in the "security sector" at the Interior Ministry and the Presidential Department.

What kind of social system exists in Iraq? During the course of the 1970s, the period of Saddam Hussein's "close relationship" with the USSR (and with the Iraqi Communist Party), it was claimed that Iraq had chosen the "non-capitalistic" (albeit not socialist) road to development. Theorists with Maoist sympathies, such as Samir Amin, claimed, on the contrary, that Iraq's status as a "dependent nation" had not substantially changed and that the lower middle class in power had taken over the role of "cog in the wheel of imperialist domination" from the large landowners and comprador bourgeoisie. Many perceived the 1970s regime as "lower middle class" in order to reconcile the contradiction between, on the one hand, its anti-imperialist approach and certain progressive socioeconomic measures it adopted, and, on the other hand, its antidemocratic, anti-working class, repressive actions, and inability to implement fully those reforms it had introduced, thus preserving a private, capitalist sector. From 1979 on, the Iraqi regime was generally depicted as "state capitalist." This simple definition, however, conceals a series of diverse inter-

pretations of how the regime worked, its socioeconomic dynamics, and the nature of Iraq's social classes.

Summing up the various positions, Iraqi "state capitalism" is widely seen as a transitory stage between a precapitalistic period and the establishment of true capitalism, a phase of capitalist incubation where "state capitalism" has the role of unifying the domestic market and destroying precapitalist relations, thus leading agriculture and craft production into the capitalist cycle. Supporters of this view always underline the tendency toward a strengthening of private capital and the leverage given to this process by the Iraqi regime (although this analysis would appear to be contradicted by the continued, even increased, weight of the state in Iraqi economic affairs during the course of the 1980s), albeit within the context of Iraq's dependence on Western imperialism at the technological level.

Other observers, on the other hand, have pointed to the deeply parasitical nature of this "new middle class" (above all, those members of it who have gotten rich in the construction industry), which prospered under the Baathist regime without displaying any "revolutionary" intention or capacity to take over the government thus concluding the "transitional" stage of capitalism under a dictatorial, repressive regime. On the contrary, this "new middle class" appeared totally subordinate to the wishes of the Iraqi state. Those who saw this state as controlled by the privately owned capital accumulated in the construction industry were reminded that Saddam Hussein's speech in 1983, before a meeting of building contractors, was hardly of a servile nature, but rather the speech of a ruler.

According to this latter view, the key element is Iraqi state bureaucracy, a kind of "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" that owns no means of production but governs both the state and production according to capitalist rules. It is a bourgeoisie that generates from within its ranks a future class of capitalists in sectors not directly dependent on the state by investing in productive sectors fortunes that were accumulated during years at the head of the state apparatus. In fact, the number of millionaires in Iraq grew from tens to thousands under the Baathist regime. At the end of the 1980s, this class was still relatively weak, as can be seen from its failure to relaunch the economy through a series of measures involving the further privatization and liberalization of the economy. Despite its weakness, this class was destined to increase in strength through its transformation from a "bureaucratic bourgeoisie" into a "propertied bourgeoisie."

The fact remains, however, that in all these years Iraq has failed to regain its self-sufficiency in food, has remained totally dependent on oil exports (in much the same way as the various Middle Eastern oil states), and has been rather limited in its industrial growth (featuring the construction of enormous plants revealed to be veritable "white elephants"). At the end of the day, Iraq's level of industrialization has been far inferior to that of Egypt. The experience of the Baathist regime in Iraq has proven a failure in terms of the country's "development," despite the enormous amount of foreign currency generated by the oil business (which was dramatically absent during Nasser's experiment in Egypt); the vast human

resources of a sizeable country with millions of inhabitants; and Iraq's break from imperialist domination (through nationalization of the entire banking and oil sectors, monopoly of foreign trade, and closure of borders to foreign capital). The question has to be asked: Why?

The Iraqi bourgeoisie was clearly incapable of "completing" the 1958 Revolution. In fact, long before the 1964 nationalization program had been introduced, it had lost any significant political expression it may once have possessed. During the final years of Qasim's regime, the Iraqi state was already solidly based on the country's armed forces, the vital "skeletal" structure of the bourgeois state, which had survived the stormy period of 1958-59. On the one hand, the bourgeoisie was incapable of ensuring the development of the nation because it was not sufficiently homogeneous and was too closely associated with the interests of the old landowning class. On the other hand, it constituted a potential political hindrance to pan-Arab nationalist power (Nasserite, Baathist, nationalist military power that took over the country in 1963), given the predominance of the Shiite elite. This is why the state, based on the armed forces, first took over politically from the bourgeoisie, then replaced it economically at the head of the nationalized industries in 1964, when army officers were appointed to the major posts within those industries.

The Baath Party that took power in 1968 numbered only a few hundred members, an organization desperately searching for a social base. It did not look for support among the country's poor peasants or workers; in fact, its aim from the start

was to neutralize the subaltern classes, co-opting the ICP to a subordinate role within government and alternating periods of repression with others of concessions. It looked to build its power base among the middle-class members of the state apparatus (as well as the armed forces, which have grown out of all proportion over the years), the new middle-class strata totally dependent upon the state, and the various rural middle classes.

The failure of the Baath plan was not the result of one or another of the features of land reform, of the management of the multiyear plans for growth, or of a series of mistakes made while managing the state economy (though a number of mistakes were indeed made). The underlying reason for its failure can be found in the class nature of this regime, in a social base that managed available resources for its own benefit and impeded the implementation of an effective, well-balanced plan for the development of Iraq. (This is dramatically revealed by the awful effect on the country's health conditions caused by the international embargo compared to the health situation in Cuba, a nonbourgeois regime itself subjected to an embargo and to difficulties similar to those in Iraq from 1989 on).

At the center of this regime lay an unstable "bureaucratic bourgeois caste," prone to repeated crises (the continual clashes at the top levels of state affairs, the repeated coup attempts, and the continual purges of the state apparatus) and to changes in sociopolitical orientation (as shown by the oscillations between "opening up" to private capital and reaffirming state control over the economy). One decisive stabilizing factor was the organization of a permanent state of war and a

form of social violence that managed to direct the tension present in society in the regime's interests: the never-ending series of wars both within the country (against the Kurds and the Southern Shiites) and against foreign states (to which U.S. and European imperialism have contributed decisively), and the real "domestic war," which exploded in 1988-90, against the country's multitude of immigrants and women. (In 1989-90, more than a thousand immigrant workers were massacred. The use of contraceptives and abortion were outlawed, and a campaign was launched to fire women from their jobs and to encourage each family to have at least five children in the name of the Iraqi nation).

At the end of the day, this process of stabilization was only partial. The regime's "final hour"—discernable in the spring of 1991 and merely postponed by U.S. intervention—was due, whether at the hands of military forces (internal, foreign, or a combination of the two), or from the "thunder that strikes terror in the hearts of our oppressors" invoked by the Communist Party's founding manifesto of March 1935.

CHAPTER SIX

War, Insurrection, and International Embargo, 1990–2002

U.S. armed forces and their allies began military operations against Iraq on January 16, 1991. Though officially declared a war for the liberation of Kuwait (after its occupation by Iraq in August of the previous year), it was in reality the first action in a war that would continue for thirteen years, with an international embargo that contributed to the death of countless civilians, regular bombing raids, and finally with the 2003 invasion and subsequent military occupation of Iraq.

The U.S. government declared that the 1991 Gulf War would establish the “new world order” announced after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the “state socialist” countries. In fact, it served only to reestablish U.S. imperialist supremacy internationally and secure the financial gains deriving from control of oil supplies needed to sustain North American capitalism (through a stricter control over the Middle East). In the following years, talk of the “new world order” disappeared from the scene. As for the much-flaunted “democracy,” it ended with the massacre of hundreds of thousands of

Iraqi crushed under the dual yoke of the United States and the Baathist regime. The crushing of the Iraqi uprising in spring 1991 revealed the true logic of this war.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq took place on August 2, 1990. The Iraqi population passively accepted this war (in the hope that it would bring about the regime's downfall); however, its strong opposition was clear from the unprecedented student demonstration against the regime held in Baghdad in November 1990, which was preceded by the distribution of handwritten leaflets. The situation in Baghdad was considered by the regime to be so dangerous that it planned the evacuation of two million inhabitants (of whom fewer than a million were evacuated). Furthermore, due to a growing number of deserters from the Iraqi army based in Kuwait, many of the army's military camps were surrounded by minefields, not for their protection, but to prevent soldiers from deserting the front. The Revolutionary Command Council also issued a decree establishing that wives, children, and relatives of deserters should be arrested. Even those who did not desert voiced their opposition to the war, as is evidenced by the dramatic revelation in a Kurdish report that Saddam Hussein had some six hundred officers executed in November 1990.

The opposition, on the other hand, simply failed to notice what was happening, just as it had failed to take advantage of the regime's crisis in 1988–90. The opposition, and the ICP in particular, did denounce the annexation of Kuwait, but many people feared they would lose the moral right to oppose the regime if they did not side with Baghdad against the West.

When, on January 16, 1991, bombings by the United States and their allies began, the Kurdish section of the ICP ordered a halt to military actions against the Iraqi army, so as not to "stab the army in the back." Indeed, while criticisms of the ICP by militants abroad were aimed at its insufficient support for the Iraqi army against U.S. imperialism, its militants in Iraq took the party to task for forgetting its urgent duty to overthrow Saddam Hussein's regime.

Three days prior to the official signing of the cease-fire, during the chaotic retreat and the bloodbath wreaked by allied forces on the Mutlaa Road, the "highway of death," with the total disruption of the Iraqi army and the security forces losing control of the situation, on February 28, 1991, in the south of Iraq, a spontaneous, mass insurrection against the regime began. This insurrection was triggered by the retreating officers and troops that joined forces with the population. They took to the streets to denounce Saddam Hussein and the Baathist regime, then marched to take over the mayor's offices, Baathist headquarters, the buildings from which the secret police operated, the prison, and (where present) the army barracks.

The first revolt was in the Sunni towns of Abul Khasib and Zubair, 60 to 70 kilometers south of Basra, on February 28, which then exploded in the space of a few hours, a few days, and by March 7, the entire South was in rebel hands. This insurrection was totally spontaneous, not coordinated by any organized groups, but started by groups of citizens. Often, not only did one town not know what was happening in the next,

but no information traveled from one neighborhood to the next in the same town. Eyewitness reports are unequivocal; one soldier stated, "The Iraqi army cannot bear the responsibility of the defeat because it did not fight. Hussein is responsible." Another declared:

We were anxious to withdraw, to end the mad adventure, when Saddam Hussein announced withdrawal within 24 hours — though without any formal agreement with the allies to ensure the safety of the retreating forces. We understood that he wanted the allies to wipe us out: he had already withdrawn the Republican Guard to safety. We had to desert our tanks and vehicles to avoid aerial attacks. We walked 100 kilometres towards the Iraqi territories; hungry, thirsty and exhausted. In Zubair we decided to put an end to Saddam and his regime. We shot at his posters. Hundreds of retreating soldiers came to the city and joined the revolt: by the afternoon, there were thousands of us. Civilians supported us and demonstrations started. We attacked the party building and the security services headquarters. Within a few hours, the uprising spread to Basra, at exactly three o'clock on the morning of the first of March.

In Basra, the soldiers and the rebelling population discovered a secret prison beneath the Bata shoe factory. Hundreds of prisoners were freed, some of whom shouted, "Down with al-Bakr!" believing he was still head of state, though he had been replaced by Saddam Hussein twelve years earlier!

The rebellion in southern Iraq was without any experienced leadership, any organization, any political or military program. What is more, it had two essential disadvantages: its vicinity to the Republican Guard positions and the intervention of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq,

whose slogan was "Shiite power," which acted as if it led the revolt even though it was just one of many organizations present. This led those who disagreed with its line to become passive. The Iraqi army began to take control again of the South on March 8, when it took Basra from the rebel forces. It completed this campaign on March 17, with the active help of U.S. and allied troops.

In the meantime, the revolt had been triggered in the North (on March 5); by March 20, which saw the fall of Kirkuk, the entire northern part of Iraq had been taken from Saddam Hussein's regime. In the towns of Kurdistan, the revolt followed a different pattern. First the civilian population took to the streets with precise intentions and fought against the security forces and the army. They were subsequently joined by army deserters, resulting in the scattering of the army (fifty thousand soldiers abandoned their units, refusing to fight) and also in the Saladin Force (the Kurdish armed force set up by Saddam Hussein) going over to the rebels' side. The centers of power of the security forces and the Baath Party were the scenes of particularly harsh battles, both at Sulaimaniya—where 150 rebels were killed and 600 members of the security forces were subsequently executed—and at Kirkuk.

The revolt was spontaneous: at Sulaimaniya, Arbil, and Kirkuk, dozens of *shoras* (an Iranian term for "councils" or "soviets") were set up in workplaces and local neighborhoods (fifty in Sulaimaniya, forty-two in Arbil, and six in Kirkuk). Initially, the nationalist forces followed in the wake of the popular revolts. Then they tried unsuccessfully to break up the

shoras, after which they managed to gain control over them and distort the way in which they functioned (thus turning them into KDP shoras, PUK shoras, and shoras for each of the political forces present).

The left-wing organizations as such had no role in the revolt either. Some of their militants organized mobilization and fighting in certain specific circumstances, but with no coordination between leaders. During those chaotic days, militants of Communist Perspective, an extreme left-wing organization dating back to 1983, according to certain sources, were in action in Sulaimaniya, but ICP militants were also present, together with members of other, smaller extreme left-wing groups (the Insurrectional League, Communist Action Group, Revolutionary Workers' Union, Socialist Workers' Passion).

On March 28, the regime's counteroffensive began, and the threat of chemical warfare led to panic among the population. The same day, Kirkuk fell to the Iraqi army, and the last Kurdish town to fall was Sulaimaniya, on April 3. Millions of people fled to the mountains and into Turkey and Iran.

The revolt was violently put down by the regime. There can be no doubt that the support given to the regime by the United States was significantly influential, although the most important factor leading to the subsequent wave of repression was the lack of mobilization of Central Iraq and, above all, of Baghdad. What were the reasons behind this immobility? A number of factors have already been mentioned: the concentration of Saddam Hussein's best troops in the Baghdad area; the evacuation of almost one million people; to a certain de-

gree, the slowness with which information was dispersed (it was five days before those in Baghdad knew of the revolt in Basra); and the information that got through was exaggerated. People were led to believe that the military rebels were about to reach Baghdad and liberate the city (a belief encouraged by forces such as the PUK and the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution). However, the decisive factor was the absence of any opposition organizations in Baghdad capable of providing a lead. Between March 11 and March 13, in the midst of the revolt, the various opposition groups and parties met in Baghdad; nevertheless, this meeting failed to furnish any concrete plans, and, in any case, there was no opposition leader in Baghdad capable of guiding the people. The ICP fully accepted the Iraqi opposition's general responsibility for this state of affairs.

The insurrection spread throughout the country but was subsequently crushed in a bloodbath, thanks to the support given to the regime by the United States and its allies. This violent repression occurred amid the total silence of the Arab countries, frightened that the revolutionary wave might spread over their borders; and, worse still, amid the silence of the Arab and international Left, who abandoned the democratic cause in the hypocritical hands of U.S. imperialism.

The failure of the insurrection against the regime, together with the decline of the USSR and "real socialism," led to searching debate within the ICP. This debate was the precursor to the fifth party congress, held in Iraqi Kurdistan in 1993. The ICP, compared with other Middle Eastern Communist

Parties, was one that, despite rejecting its Stalinist past, placed great emphasis on the need to renew, rather than abandon, the communist tradition. The majority within the party rejected the proposal to change the party's name. In this, the ICP was closer to the Lebanese Communist Party than to the Stalinist parties (such as the Jordanian Communist Party, the Khaled Bekdash faction of the Syrian Communist Party, and that faction of the Saudi Arabian Communist Party abroad), or to those Communist Parties that rejected their past, changed their names, and embraced the nationalist or liberal cause (such as the Communist Parties of Palestine, Algeria, and Tunisia, and the faction of the Saudi Arabian Communist Party operating within the country).

In the eyes of the ICP, the "renewal of the communist tradition" is synonymous with the adoption of a social-democratic form of pragmatism, designed to achieve socialism, true enough, but in such a vague, distant future that it is difficult to see exactly what shape and form it will take. The underlying reason given for this is the economic backwardness of the country, which can only be overcome through "productive capitalism," the "productive sections of capitalism," and the correct working of the market economy. Hence, acknowledgement of the role to be played by private enterprise in the post-Hussein reconstruction of the country. The keywords are "democracy" and "renewal." The ICP rationalized its bureaucratic structure, and its sixteen hierarchical levels (compared with only ten in the Iraqi army) were slimmed down to five or six. Half of the Central Committee was renewed, and the

newly elected secretary was the young Hamid Majid Musa, who had only joined the Central Committee ten years earlier.

At its 1993 congress, the ICP demanded the end to the international embargo and the application of UN Resolution 688 (regarding democratic rights in Iraq, passed in April 1999). It also underlined the critical need for the reorganization of the party in Baghdad, and for an alliance with the country's other democratic, patriotic forces in the name of a "united, democratic, federal Iraq."

It was decided that its Kurdish section would become a separate party (the Kurdish Communist Party), although as soon as the new party was set up, it split. The result was that those militants fighting for the independence of Kurdistan formed the Party of Action for the Independence of Kurdistan, although this group rejoined the Kurdish Communist Party's ranks in April 2002 (however, its militants did not give up the struggle for independence). At the Kurdish parliamentary elections held in 2002, the ICP won 45,000 votes, that is, 4.5 percent of total votes cast.

The 1990s proved to be a nightmare for the Iraqi people. One after another of the country's productive activities ground to a halt, and the population found itself between the devil (the repressive regime led by Saddam Hussein) and the deep blue sea (the international embargo and its dramatic consequences). The standard of living regressed to what it had been in the 1940s, and the mortality rate rose dramatically. Currently, three million to five million Iraqis live abroad. Popular revolt was brewing in this devastated country, and in the south

of Iraq, it exploded once again in May 1992. In the marshlands of the Tigris and the Euphrates, guerrilla warfare continued despite the regime's attempts to "reclaim" these areas by evacuating hundreds of thousands of people and starting a series of bloody offensives. These led to the turning point between August and November 1998, which was marked by indiscriminate mass executions.

In February–March 1994, Baghdad saw the first armed actions by groups of rebels. In February 1999, after the murder of the Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr and two of his children (al-Sadr was the fourth Shiite religious leader assassinated since 1994), twenty or so of Iraq's towns and cities, including Baghdad, were the scenes of popular uprisings, with fifty demonstrators and seventeen members of the security forces killed. Control of Basra was momentarily seized by the demonstrators on March 17, but the reaction of the regime was swift and of unprecedented brutality: on March 21, 180 people were executed; on March 23, fifty-six more were arrested, then executed. The entire summer was characterized by a series of executions in the country's prisons, up to the bloodbath in September, when about five hundred people were executed. Central and Western Iraq (traditionally considered a stronghold of the regime) also witnessed local revolts, armed clashes, and guerrilla warfare. In the north, on the other hand, a bloody war was taking place in the *de facto* independent Kurdistan, involving the two main nationalist groups. Between 1994 and 1997, some two thousand to three thousand people died, while repressive incursions by the Turkish and Iraqi

armies took place throughout the decade, together with bloody actions by agents working for Baghdad, followed by numerous terrorist attacks.

The ruling Baath Party witnessed its popular support gradually vaporizing, dealing with a succession of attempted coups. It increasingly placed its faith in the traditional structures of Iraqi society, resurrecting tribes and tribal leaders (who were very different from those of Iraq's colonial period, commonly derided as tribal leaders "made in Taiwan"), and the latter were given more power within the state. Repression remained one of the key elements in the regime's battle for survival. In addition to the attacks on the rebels in the southern marshlands and the crushing of the revolt in February-March 1999, the regime launched a campaign to "cleanse" the country's prisons in the fall of 1997. Within the space of a year, 2,500 political prisoners had been executed, and the regime continued, undaunted, in this vein during the following years. At the end of 1998, Iraq was subdivided into four governorates headed by military leaders. The regime also spent time and resources on the Arabization of Kirkuk, involving the expulsion of some 100,000 Kurds over the last decade.

The ICP held its sixth congress in 1997, followed by a national conference, the fifth in the party's history, in 1999, and a seventh party congress in 2001. During these years, the slogans remained much the same as before: for the downfall of the dictatorship and the international trial of Saddam Hussein for crimes against humanity; for the unconditional removal of the international embargo (followed by UN control of the use

made of financial resources by Baghdad, and the continued political, diplomatic, and military isolation of the regime); for a united, democratic, federal Iraq; against any form of outside military intervention—"[D]emocracy can only be achieved by the people and their diverse forces and national parties, through popular insurrection or any other means." The ICP drew up a "patriotic, democratic plan" and, after a long, exhausting series of negotiations and bilateral agreements, formed a Coalition of Iraqi National Forces in July 2002. This coalition was composed of thirteen organizations (the three most important of which were the ICP, the pro-Syrian Baath, and the Islamic Dawa Party, the historically "moderate" organization of Southern Shiite Muslims). All shared in the rejection of Saddam Hussein's regime and of U.S. military operations and policy to "save the people and the nation from economic sanctions, dictatorship, and aggression." Relations with those groups and organizations that consented to U.S. patronage did not exist, partly because these were, for the most part, organizations of emigrants with no weight in Iraq, composed of "Rolex revolutionaries."

According to the ICP, Washington's policy until 2001 had been to keep Saddam Hussein in power (ever since the United States saved him from popular insurrection in March 1991). Washington only changed its mind after September 11, 2001, in favor of its own direct presence in the Middle East, designed to transform Iraq into a cornerstone of U.S. regional policy. With regard to the Iraqi regime, the ICP maintained that it would now represent the interests of a parasitic bour-

geoisie following the weakening of the role played by the bureaucratic bourgeoisie. Finally, the party underlined the crucial importance of its urban base, though it fails to reveal the extent of such support. (Claims vary enormously, and, while party exponents tend to minimize the existence of such support, strangely enough, outside observers tend to consider it significant.) All military action within Iraq is seen in a positive light while not "claimed" as such by the party. During these years, the ICP experienced two miniscule splits among its more right-wing membership: one saw Yusuf Hamdan leave the party to offer his services immediately to the Baath Party and Saddam Hussein, setting up in Baghdad in 2000 a puppet "Iraqi Communist Party"; the other involved a group called the "ICP-National Trend," which rehashed the old arguments advanced by the *Communist Tribune*, and is said to have offered an olive branch to Saddam Hussein in the face of U.S. aggression.

The eighth ICP congress is due to discuss the questions of socialism, the ideological and class character of the party, and the party's internal structure.

July 1993 saw the completion of the reconstruction of the Iraqi far Left: Communist Perspective (or at least a majority of its members), which had already been active at Sulaimaniya in March 1991, joined forces with three other groups to form the Worker Communist Party of Iraq, affiliated to the Iranian party of the same name that was founded in 1991. Certain other small groupings remained independent, such as Proletarian Struggle (formerly Communist Action Group).

The Worker Communist Party, which held its second congress in December 2002 at Sulaimaniya, claims it has "thousands of members in Iraq and abroad." Its present secretary is Ribwar Ahmad. It is a "worker-oriented" organization based on workers' councils, with a strong antinationalist flavor (it is in favor of an independent Kurdistan, provided this betters living standards and helps the struggle of Kurdish workers, but is against the idea of a federal Iraqi state, which it believes would reinforce "ethnicist" and nationalist tendencies in Kurdistan), and actively opposes the international embargo and U.S. imperialism.

The embargo has destroyed the resistance of the masses against the Saddam regime. It has weakened their will against its arrogance...Whoever uses such means to force Saddam Hussein to surrender is more criminal and cruel than him.

Nevertheless, it was strongly opposed to Saddam Hussein's regime and refuses to entertain the idea of allying itself to any other political groups or parties that it perceives as bourgeois, avoiding any "patriotic" terminology (unlike the ICP). It sets itself against purely Islamic organizations, and its primary aim is the creation of a "socialist republic." The WCPI has suffered heavy losses in recent years, in particular at the hands of the PUK, which in the summer of 2000 began a strong campaign of repression against it.

Marion Farouk-Sluglett and Peter Sluglett, in their volume of the history of Iraq, wrote in an almost desperate vein that today, "[t]here is no exiled Lenin, no imprisoned Mandela, to take over the leadership." Although it is clear that no left-wing

communist leaders in today's Iraq possess the charisma and ability of such men, there is, however, a political party, the ICP, and other more left-wing organizations, with a long history and hundreds of extremely dedicated militants. Over the next few months and years, they will face certain decisive moments, the outcome of which will depend on the capacity of the communist movement to correctly perceive social dynamics, popular feeling, political importance, and when and how to invest its own forces and energies. This is an extremely difficult task, one that will have to be performed in a devastated country plagued by vested interests and diverse forms of foreign intervention.

Nevertheless, the political struggle of Iraq's working class and its pauperized masses has continued even during the terrible past decade. In the 1940s, the ICP emerged as the main political force in the country within just a few years, starting from no more than a handful of militants, and it came to the fore once again during the 1958 Revolution, after some ten years of clandestinity, repression, and political infighting. Today, as then, the main weakness of the ICP lies in its strategic views and their interaction with current tasks; however, the difference now is that it no longer operates under the watchful eye of Moscow, which at the time meant structuring all debate and policy decisions to conform with the USSR's foreign policy interests. (In this, the Iraqi Left shared both the potential and the weaknesses of the majority of the international Left in general.)

As well as combating the international economic embargo

and the new U.S. war, the international Left ought to develop a network of support and solidarity for Iraq's communists and those sections of the population fighting for the downfall of Saddam Hussein. Such solidarity, which was so sadly lacking in the spring of 1991, could prove an extremely important source of moral and concrete support, which is essential if the oppressed and exploited Iraqi population is to finally govern its own country.

EPILOGUE

The Communist Left in Iraq Under U.S. Occupation

The ICP and the Worker Communist Party of Iraq (WCPI) opposed both the Baathist regime and the war conducted by the Anglo-American coalition through the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime on April 9, 2003. Neither party took part in any of the groups or conferences-in-exile sponsored by the U.S. government prior to the war. Both had their main bases in Iraqi Kurdistan, where they operated legally, while they maintained clandestine cells throughout the rest of Iraq, and each probably had just a few hundred militants. The ICP also had its own military groups, which have since been officially disbanded. Immediately after the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, both the ICP and the WCPI opened offices and began to operate visibly once again in all the country's most important cities and towns, and started to publish weekly papers. They did not take part in the two anti-Baathist party conferences organized by U.S. forces in Iraq during the second half of April 2003, and have constantly denounced the U.S. occupation of Iraq.

Despite these similarities between the ICP and the WCPI, the two parties have very different political viewpoints. The ICP believes that the way out of the present catastrophe lies in the formation of a "National Conference" representing all Iraq's anti-Baathist forces, the appointment of a transitional government, and the drafting of a constitution to be submitted to a referendum, after which the population should be called to vote in free elections. If the National Conference were to exercise full political power, the ICP claims it would then call for the Anglo-American troops to leave the country, relinquishing supervision of Iraq to the United Nations, which should then guarantee the democratic nature and transparency of the constitutional referendum and subsequent elections.

During the first half of July 2003, U.S. proconsul L. Paul Bremer III appointed a Governing Council with limited powers and subject to his direct veto, which received the support of nearly all Iraq's political forces (with the exception of the Sadrists, the largest and most radical Shiite group in Iraq). The ICP's general secretary served as the only Communist on the Governing Council, composed of twenty-five members overall. The ICP did not want to be isolated from the political arena in which it wished to discuss its proposed National Conference. It decided to participate in this Governing Council (pointing out, however, that it was an arena of political conflict) hoping to encourage the council to work toward the withdrawal of foreign troops and aiming also to submit its proposal for a National Conference. It appealed to the Iraqi people to support the Governing Council, while monitoring its activities.

This decision was an extremely difficult and embarrassing one, according to some sources within the Central Committee. The party continued to claim that Bremer had no right of veto—against all evidence to the contrary—but that the situation inevitably called for a *de facto* form of U.S. control.

In summer 2003, the ICP's main mobilization was a July 14 demonstration commemorating the 1958 Revolution, which drew the participation of many other organizations and parties. According to some sources, as many as ten thousand people marched through the streets of Baghdad.

The clandestine union that the ICP ran has merged into the ranks of the old Baathist union, purged of its former leaders, and a series of union actions have taken place in Baghdad and Basra. The ICP maintains that the fight against occupation has to be conducted using political methods, but it does not exclude the use of arms in the future. Finally, its position on the armed struggle in Iraq is complex: it condemned outright the bloody attacks on the Jordanian Embassy, against the UN, and against Ayatollah Muhammad Bakir al-Hakim of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution (all three of which are claimed to be the work of the Baathists), and it condemned the acts of sabotage against Iraq's power stations, water supplies, oil pipelines, which made the lives of the Iraqi people even worse than they already were. On the other hand, with regard to the attacks on the U.S. army, it points out the extreme political diversity among the country's armed factions, and the reasons, local and otherwise, that have led to such armed confrontation.

After summer 2003 the ICP has gone along with the "Governing Council" and accepted all its subsequent decisions:

The establishment of an executive in September 2003;

The "November 2003 Agreement" signed with Bremer, which provided for a new Constituent Assembly of notables appointed from above;

The adoption of the "Transitional Administrative Law" (a kind of draft constitution) in March 2004, through which—following the huge demonstrations in January—the government did a somersault and revoked its decisions of four months before, which provided for an elected assembly and detailed the framework for its activities;

The granting of political cover to "coalition" forces in their military offensive against Fallujah and the al-Sadr militia, from April 2004 onwards;

In May 2004, the creation of the Allawi government;

In June 2004, the acceptance of the disbandment of its armed militia and its entry in the Iraqi armed forces;

In the same month, the quiet abandonment of the "Transitional Administrative Law" (adopted only three months before), following UN Security Council Resolution 1546, which confirmed the decision to have an elected constituent assembly but now without the various democratic guarantees granted in March.

At every stage the ICP has defended the decisions taken by the "Governing Council," stating that these were the best possible in the "complex situation" in Iraq and the balance of forces in the "Governing Council" itself, and moreover given the relationship between the Council and the "Provisional Authority of the coalition forces" (that is, Bremer—the real core of power in Iraq). This position has been refuted by facts, as

shown by the reversal of decisions in November after the huge demonstrations in support of democracy organized by the Shi-ite clergy.

In the course of the year the ICP has continued to support a "peaceful and relatively fast transition from the preceding dictatorial period to a federal and democratic Iraq, based on respect for the law and for human rights." For this reason, it appeals "to the entire population, to strengthen their patriotic and social unity and intensify their fraternal cooperation." The ICP considers itself part of all those "patriotic and democratic forces," to which it assigns two tasks: "To bring to an end the occupation and ensure a swift transfer of powers to the Iraqis, so as to reestablish national sovereignty" and "To eradicate the heritage and influences from the previous dictatorial regime, and build a democratic regime in its place." The influences inherited from the prior dictatorial regime that should be eradicated ("to avoid a new dictatorship in future") are of a "political, psychological and ideological" nature. The ICP claims that "the Governing Council is only a tool among many others in our struggle, with which to bring about our sovereignty and national independence, and create the foundations for democracy."

Moreover, the ICP,

as a unifying patriotic force, always defending the higher interests of our country, must embody popular consciousness and national unity in [our] policies and practice. The Party will then become a real force, able to lead the entire patriotic movement—a pillar for the wider democratic movement—in the fight for the end of foreign occupation and for the reestab-

lishment of our national sovereignty and independence, rejecting oppression in all its forms and laying the foundations for a modern and democratic Iraqi state, based on the rights of citizens and on social justice.

With regards to the military situation in Iraq and the actions carried out by the resistance, the ICP shifted in October 2003 from a careful and articulate position on the various targets and local situations to one of utter condemnation of any armed actions, without exemption. In December 2003, the party went as far as stating that the lack of security in the country was mainly due to the lack of an "efficient and resolute" repression of the "resistance" groups by coalition forces, adding that military actions justified the indefinite presence of the occupying troops.

In April 2004, faced with the military offensive by Anglo-American forces against Fallujah and the al-Sadr militia, despite its agreement on the objectives of such offensive, the ICP protested against the "disproportionate measures" taken by coalition forces to combat the "terrorists" (stopping short of suspending its cooperation with the Governing Council, as Iraqi forces had done as a sign of protest). As for the transitional process toward an Iraqi government, the ICP claims that "it is a complex process, one which will only succeed when a whole range of preconditions can be satisfied. One such condition is, importantly, ensuring the material and human resources needed to protect the new authority. This means creating an army, a police force, and other bodies to decrease terrorist forces, all remnants of the former regime

and all other forces hostile to democratic change."

In an interview given on April 20, 2004, to the *Morning Star*, the Communist Party of Great Britain's daily newspaper, Salam Ali, member of the Central Committee of the ICP, articulated all the pressures on its party at the international level:

The Iraqi people do not need any lesson on how to manage their affairs. Our people have a very long experience and know their enemies well. Some left-wing commentators (although I don't think they're doing it deliberately) are giving the impression that there is someone who wants to give us some lessons and tell us what to do. But we don't need any of this. Only democratic regimes representing the will of the people can oppose imperialism. Saddam proved to be a paper tiger and collapsed in just two days... We need support, not lessons.

Like the ICP, the WCPI believes that the battle against military occupation ought to be conducted using political means at the present stage, focusing on the organization and mobilization of Iraq's workers, unemployed, and women. It leads an organization of unemployed citizens (which, according to the WCPI, had 130,000 members by the end of September 2003). The group took part in a series of demonstrations in Baghdad, Kirkuk, Nasiriya and Basra at the end of July 2003 and between mid-August and the beginning of October. The protesters failed to see any of their demands met by the Coalition Provisional Authority, including the demand for an unemployment benefit of \$100 per month; in fact, the demonstrations resulted in the imprisonment of numerous militants. The WCPI has also set up a women's organization, which, among other

things, fights against Islamic obscurantism. This has made it the target of attacks, sometimes armed, by the Sadrists and the Supreme Council.

Politically, the WCPI believes that the battle against the occupation of Iraq cannot be separated from the battle against Islamic extremism. This explains its outright condemnation of the Governing Council, which it sees as including some of the country's most reactionary Islamic elements, in addition to being a puppet organization in the hands of the occupying forces. In April and May, it asked for the United Nations to govern Iraq, "imposing on society" a series of democratic measures. However, it has recently refrained from such requests, and currently defines its task as defeating politically the Islamic and nationalist forces in Iraq. Its political objective consists of the foundation, generalization, and assumption of power by local-area and workplace councils. Like the ICP, the WCPI also supports the establishment of a democratically elected Constitutional Assembly.

After summer 2003, the WCPI continued to oppose the Governing Council, claiming that "now things are even worse than under Saddam: instead of having just one Saddam Hussein we have twenty-five, and with a political program with more Islamic influences and even more restrictive." The party has always kept its distance from any debates and mobilizations for a gradual transfer of power to Iraqis, and rejects any identification with "nationalist and patriotic" considerations. According to the WCPI, there can be no "right to self-determination" in the abstract, devoid of social content, and

for this reason it opposes the "resistance," since it associates it with residual Baathist elements and Islamic political forces (whether Sunni or Shiite). Instead, the WCPI has called for a "third camp...of workers and of humanity" between imperialist forces and "Islamic fascism": "The workers' struggle against the occupying armies cannot be separated from the fight against reactionary forces and their medieval vision, or the nightmare society [they are seeking to create]."

The international left wants us to surrender to those forces and groups who are trying not only to annihilate communists, but any secular individual who happens to love freedom and opposes Islamic forces... Few others in the world are as stupid as the traditional left, who encourages and supports one terrorist against another terrorist in a conflict such as this one. This is the hidden truth of an anti-war movement who is becoming smaller and smaller and has increasingly little influence on events.

For these reasons the WCPI has focused on social mobilizations, organizing groups of women and the unemployed, and creating in December 2003, a union under its control, opposed to both the ICP-controlled union (which is recognized by the Governing Council as the sole representative of workers) and to the union of the old Baathist regime.

Other extremely small, self-proclaimed "communist" groups have emerged as a result of splits within the ICP over a twenty-year period. However, in terms of their political agenda and conduct, these "patriotic" organizations differ very little from the Arab nationalist organizations in Iraq. In the 1990s, the old ICP-Central Command—a split from the left of the ICP

at the end of the 1960s that was destroyed through various betrayals during the 1970s—was reestablished. This particular group is based in London and uses the same “patriotic” language as the ICP (though in a far more coherent manner) against the Governing Council. This year it emerged that other small communist groups (also left splits from the ICP) may also be active, particularly among university students and intellectuals.

Thinking it could become a “party of struggle and of government”—even in a puppet government totally devoid of power—the ICP has increasingly become a “left” cover for Anglo-American forces. It has kept its “patriotic” rhetoric, despite this becoming more and more at odds with the party’s effectively subordinate role to the real center of power in Iraq: first Bremer and then John Negroponte, the former UN ambassador who replaced him. Its betrayal of workers and the oppressed in Iraq will be a much bigger burden on the party than its previous political mistakes, including its total subordination to Qasim’s leadership in 1958 and then its equally total subordination to Saddam Hussein in the 1970s. In the past, the ICP justified its suicidal course in terms of the pressures and links it had with Moscow, subordinating its interests to the USSR’s regional policies and goals. This course of action was undertaken painfully, and caused splits and differences lasting for years. But today, the ICP’s course is dictated by purely internal dictates (as is the case with many other former Communist parties). The ICP has become a party with only one aspiration: the creation of “a modern democratic state,” able to ensure a

capitalist market, controlled privatizations, and foreign investment (even by keeping state control over oil revenues). The ICP is trying to carve out a role for itself as the representative of workers in such a state. This, of course, only insofar as any demands or needs of the workers do not conflict with the "existing balance of forces."

The Anglo-American occupation and the dismantling of the army and state security apparatus (the security forces alone numbered well over 100,000) have destroyed the old Iraqi bourgeois state. In the ensuing largely anarchic situation, the occupying forces, which have no roots in the Iraqi social structure, are the only effective power structure. The Baathist bureaucratic caste has all but disintegrated, and suffered further humiliation in seeing Hussein arrested after a tip-off, hidden in an underground hole, wretched and with no contacts of note. Today the same Iraqi bourgeoisie that up to last year was totally dependent on the old Baathist state is in disarray. The old émigré political forces sitting on the Governing Council have a limited popular basis and an even more limited claim to representativeness. In this situation, any political force wishing to rebuild a bourgeois state in Iraq has no choice but to ally itself with the U.S. and British occupation forces. There is simply no other way. This is the logic of the path on which the ICP has embarked.

The WCPI sees things differently. Its strategic aim is not to rebuild a bourgeois state in the country. It correctly identifies Islamic political forces as extremely reactionary, as forces to be fought without compromise. Its "indifference" toward

the political outcome of the Iraqi crisis, however, marginalizes the party from political life and gives it no influence over events. The great democratic battle waged by the Shiite clergy grouped around Ali al-Sistani against the "November 2003 Agreement" saw the largest demonstrations in Iraq for decades. Islamic political forces have responded to a mass democratic need no other group had paid attention to, and while the ICP was among the signatories of that very "Agreement," the WCPI was conspicuously absent. Because it sees the wide military offensive unleashed by Anglo-American forces in April and May 2004, as a clash between "two reactionary forces," the WCPI has lost sight of the fact that there was much more at stake than the legitimization of Muqtada al-Sadr or the Sunni armed groups operating in Fallujah. What was at stake was the possible reengagement of the Iraqi masses in the struggle against the occupation forces beyond the stated aims of the "resistance," indeed with hindsight against these aims. This is clearly shown by the fact that even al-Sadr, after calling for a general strike (which was opposed by the WCPI), was forced to retract his action after the first week of protests, as he feared losing control of the situation. In the meantime, the strike had spontaneously widened, paralyzing public structures and causing wave after wave of desertions from the ranks of the Iraqi police. After April 9, 2004, al-Sadr no longer called for any other mass protest and only mobilized his own militia against the Anglo-Americans (effectively leading to their massacre, considering the great disparity of forces).

Contrary to what the ICP claims, mass demonstrations constitute the most effective instrument of resistance to the occupying forces—not the pathetic Governing Council. Yet, at the same time, no political party currently appears to have the capacity to mobilize the mass of Iraqis to a degree that could have a lasting and decisive influence on political events. Not even the more deeply rooted forces such as the Sadrists—with their strictly “Khomeini-style” program and control over the massive, working-class area of East Baghdad and its more than two million inhabitants, nearly 10 percent of the entire Iraqi population—possess popular support based on the slogans of the moment. This is why the Sadrists sometimes manage to get as many as one hundred thousand demonstrators onto the streets of Baghdad, yet at other times only a few hundred. Until now, the occupying forces have always tried to find a compromise solution when faced with demonstrations by tens of thousands of people (and even when only a few hundred take to the streets). The British and U.S. forces do not possess an Iraqi state apparatus capable of controlling the country’s social forces (since the previous one vanished into thin air after the fall of Saddam Hussein). At the most, all they can do is maintain a fragile control over local areas. For this reason, they are terrified by the thought of uncontrollable social movements and immediately seek to find a compromise as soon as such movements appear on the horizon.

Armed resistance to the occupying forces is provided by an accumulation of small organizations, competing (sometimes militarily) with each other. In fact, there are Baathist organiza-

tions, others inspired by Islamic fundamentalism, others based on one variety or other of anti-Baathist Arab nationalism, and yet others of a left-wing nature. Some organizations cover large areas of the country, while others operate on a strictly local level (and in turn enjoy the greatest mass support). In August 2003, about twenty such armed resistance groups were identified. By August 2004 their number had doubled. Moreover, the presence of certain foreign organizations, such as al Qaeda, and of professional terrorists operating under the secret services of another state cannot be excluded.

The creation of the Iyad Allawi government and the transition to a formal Iraqi "sovereignty" have only made the situation in Iraq worse. At the heart of the new government is the Iraqi National Accord (INA), the organization led by Allawi and comprising old generals and other notables from the Baathist regime who had disengaged themselves from Saddam Hussein—some at the end of the 1970s, others during the 1990s—after committing some of the worst crimes perpetrated by the Iraqi Baathist regime. The Allawi government has no real powers. Everything is in fact controlled by the U.S. occupying forces, operating from the new U.S. embassy (now the largest U.S. embassy in the world). This was clearly illustrated by the events of August 2004, when Najaf suffered a heavy U.S. military offensive exclusively decided on by the U.S. command, which only informed the Iraqi government once the attack had already begun. The only "power" of the "Iraqi" government lies in its ability to plunder Iraqi state finances as it pleases to support all its lobbies in view of the planned January

2005 elections (thus creating a new bourgeois layer still dependent on the state and on all sorts of legitimate and not-so-legitimate traffics, especially concentrated in Baghdad), without moving a finger to help the Iraqi people who must endure living conditions even worse than under Saddam Hussein and during thirteen years of international embargo.

The Allawi government is obliged to hold elections in January 2005. The only, very slight legitimacy it can aspire to is that it's taking the country to the elections. Should these not take place, a popular uprising—at least among the Shiite population—seems quite likely. Faced with this situation the Allawi government is playing all its cards to ensure that the elections, even if they go ahead, should be as devoid as possible of any real meaning. This explains Allawi's support for the U.S. military offensive against Fallujah (the bloodiest onslaught since April 2003 and an utter carnage, with thousands of Iraqis killed) and the state of siege imposed until the elections. This state of siege included the suspension of democratic freedoms that are the essential prerequisite to holding any election, including the arrest of people whose only "crime" was to denounce the farcical nature of these elections and numerous manipulations of the electoral registration process.

The Iraq going to the polls will be an armored country, with no participation by Sunni organizations with any real popular roots and with just one single Shiite "unified list." Politically, the majority of Shiites (with al-Sadr continuously wavering) have decided to concentrate all their forces on the elections. This is a risky game. So far the Shiites are seen

as a decisive political force in Iraq because they have been able to express (though in a distorted way) popular needs and demands, including calls for democracy, justice, dignity, and Iraq's aspirations for a better future. However, their current cynical course may cause them to clash with these same aspirations.

Iraq is bound to become more unstable. Despite all the obstacles, though, there are still outlets for people to express their need for democracy, justice, dignity and a better future. Even today there are ways for these calls to come to the surface, thanks to a network of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), if only in a fragmented and limited way and in many cases only by making compromises with the state rather than challenging it. Other, more active organizations, such as the organizations of women and the unemployed created by the WCPI, organize and mobilize to obtain results. (International solidarity can prove invaluable in these efforts.) Ultimately, the decisive organizing force lies in stronger unions. It is vital that Iraqis share and pool their valuable experiences in this field. Within their unions, workers will be able to learn to organize themselves and manage their lives autonomously, giving concrete content to words like "democracy," "dignity," and "power." The oil workers alone could bring any Iraqi government to its knees.

In the medium and long term, the development of unions will be decisive in determining whether or not a new Iraq will emerge. But this alone will not suffice. It is critical to develop a comprehensive political perspective. A new Iraq may emerge

from the current terrible and complex situation, after thirty years of Baathist regime and eighteen months of rule by the United States and its puppets (which continues as we write). Regrettably the Iraqi Left has so far failed in this task, and rather than leading protests for the withdrawal of U.S. troops and their allies, the ICP has incredibly decided to support U.S. rule, opening a profound rift between them and popular aspirations. However, the political and social crises in Iraq are far from over, and a change of position by the WCPI or the birth of new forces could bring new hope and a new perspective to the Iraqi people.

Ilario Salucci

December 2004

Chronology of Events, 1900–2004

1900

Iraq does not exist as such. From the sixteenth century on, the area that would much later become the state of Iraq is part of the Ottoman Empire. This empire is governed from the cities, while the rural areas are dominated by rural tribes, some of them nomadic.

1912

The British-, Dutch-, and German-owned Turkish Petroleum Company purchases concessions for the exploitation of oil within the Ottoman provinces of Baghdad and Mosul.

1914–18

Turkey sides with Germany in the First World War. In order to protect its own strategic interests and potential oil fields, Great Britain occupies Basra in November 1914 and finally takes control of Baghdad in 1917. At the end of the war, many of the Iraqi provinces are occupied by British forces, although cer-

tain areas remain "hostile," part of the colonial rule of "British Mesopotamia."

1919

The period 1919–20 sees constant episodes of revolt in northern Iraq, during which British officers and functionaries are killed. Various local tribes in the area share both the Kurdish language and culture, but as yet show little interest in fighting for an independent Kurdistan. The main question remains combating any kind of "outside" government authority.

The Royal Air Force bombs the Kurdish areas. Commander Arthur Harris (later nicknamed "Bomber Harris" for his part in the Dresden bombings during the Second World War) boasts: "The Arabs and Kurds now know what a real bombing means in terms of lives and destruction. In forty-five minutes an entire village can be razed to the ground and a third of its inhabitants killed or wounded."

Colonel Gerard Leachman, a high-ranking British officer, declares that the only way to deal with these tribes is to "massacre them indiscriminately." The RAF Middle East Command declares that it possesses chemical arms that would be used against any "recalcitrant Arabs" as an "experiment." Winston Churchill comments: "I am highly in favor of using poisonous gases against uncivilized tribes....It is not necessary to use lethal gases; you can use ones that cause serious harm and induce terror without permanently affecting the majority of those they hit."

1920

During the postwar period, the victorious imperial powers share out the conquered lands. Great Britain gets Iraq (together with Palestine), while France takes Syria and Lebanon. The borders of the new Iraqi state are established by the great powers.

British authorities introduce a series of strict controls, fiscal drag is stronger than it had been under previous governments, and hard labor is introduced. June 1920 sees a revolt against British dominion (the “1920 Revolution”) in the center and south of Iraq. For three months, the British lose control over important areas of the country, several of their military positions are destroyed, and 450 of His Majesty’s troops are killed.

1921

The rebellion is crushed in February 1921; at least nine thousand rebels are wounded or killed, and entire villages are razed to the ground by the British artillery.

Great Britain decides to replace colonial power with an Arab-led administration under direct British control, to become a “mandatory” power in Iraq and officially recognized as such by the League of Nations. The state is now headed by Faisal, the first king of Iraq.

1924

The British government authorizes the use of aircraft against the Kurds. Bombs and gas are dropped on Sulaimaniya in De-

cember. Lord Thompson describes the effects of these bombings as "terrifying"; the tribal populations are forced to flee "into the desert, where hundreds die of thirst."

1927

Another Kurdish revolt.

1930

The Anglo-Iraqi Treaty prepares the ground for the independence of Iraq. However, this treaty envisages the continued presence of two British air bases and influence over Iraqi foreign policy extending until 1957.

Kurdish insurrections, caused by fear for their fate within the new Iraqi state, are crushed with the aid of the Royal Air Force.

1931

A fourteen-day general strike against the Municipal Tax Law, which introduced draconian measures (taxation tripled), and in favor of the introduction of unemployment benefit. Thousands of workers and craftsmen, including three thousand oil workers, take part in the strike and clash with the police. Kurdish revolt in Northern Iraq and revolt by the Assyrian population in Iraq.

1932

Iraq is admitted to the League of Nations and officially declared an independent state.

1933

The Association of Craftsmen (a trade union) organizes a month-long boycott of the British company Baghdad Electric Light and Power. As a consequence, trade unions and workers' organizations are outlawed and forced into clandestinity for ten years, while their leaders are imprisoned. King Faisal dies and is succeeded by his son Ghazi.

1934

The Iraq Petroleum Company begins to export oil extracted from the Kirkuk fields.

1935

Foundation of the Iraqi Communist Party in March in Baghdad. Revolt in the South, violently crushed by aircraft bombings.

1936-37

General Bakr Sidqi, an admirer of Mussolini, sets up a military government and instigates repression of the Iraqi Left. There are protests and strikes throughout the country, involving, among others, the Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk and the National Cigarette Plant in Baghdad. Twenty thousand workers take part in the strike, which is brutally crushed. Rebellion of the mid-Euphrates tribes.

1939

King Ghazi dies in a car accident. Many Iraqis believe that he was assassinated because of his openly anti-British views.

During a demonstration in Mosul, the British consul is killed.

1941

Rashid Ali al-Gailani is made prime minister after a coup d'état, at the expense of the pro-British contingents. The new government adopts a neutral stance during the Second World War, refusing to support Britain unless the latter guarantees the independence of Syria and Palestine. Contacts with the government of the Third Reich are made. British troops land at Basra, but the Iraqi government demands that they leave the country. After thirty days of fighting, British troops reinstall their supporters at the head of the Iraqi government. During British occupation, martial law is declared and several nationalist leaders arrested.

1943

Strikes for better wages are called, but are crushed by the police. In the north, there is a Kurdish revolt, followed by another in 1945.

1946

During a demonstration in Baghdad against the British presence, police kill a demonstrator. Strike of oil workers demanding higher wages and other benefits in Kirkuk. The workers clash with police, who open fire, killing ten demonstrators. During the following months, there are further strikes by print and railway workers. The government is forced to resign.

1947

Strikes at the port of Basra, on the railways, and in the oil in-

dustry, with workers demanding higher wages and the legalization of trade unions, while protesting against the continued British presence. A peasant revolt against landowners explodes at Arbat.

1948

The Iraqi government negotiates a new treaty with the British, designed to guarantee the latter a certain military role in the government of the country until 1973. Under the treaty, British troops are to withdraw from Iraq but will retain the right to return in the case of war. On January 16, the day after the treaty is approved in Portsmouth, the police kill four students during a demonstration against the treaty. This leads to an insurrection later known as al-Wathbah (The Leap).

In truth, the revolt is a reaction to the lack of food and to price increases. In the days that follow, during marches by railway workers and the inhabitants of the city's outer suburbs, a number of people are killed. On January 27, three hundred to four hundred people die during the guerrilla warfare raging in and around Baghdad. The government resigns and the treaty is retracted. The entire country is paralyzed by an unprecedented wave of strikes.

In May, some three thousand oil workers from a well near Haditha go on strike. After two and a half weeks, the government cuts off supplies of food and water to the strikers, who then decide to march on Baghdad, 250 kilometers away. This march, which is subsequently given the name *al-Masira al-Kubra* (the Great March), sees locals offering the marchers

support as they pass through the villages. Then at Fallujah, 70 kilometers from Baghdad, they are all arrested.

The British military mission is withdrawn from Iraq.

1949

Communist leaders are publicly hung in Baghdad, and their bodies left hanging for several hours as a warning to critics of the regime.

1952

Iraq's dockers go on strike, demanding wage increases and better living and working conditions. The strike is brutally repressed. In October, a protest movement, started by groups of students, transforms itself into a revolt that spreads to the country's main towns and cities. Civil rights and free, democratic elections are the principal demands. This revolt is later given the name al-Intifada (the Shock). A military government is set up and immediately imposes martial law, a curfew, and the closure of several newspapers. Eighteen demonstrators are killed. There is a peasant revolt in the province of Amara.

1953

Peasant revolts in the provinces of Arbil, Diyala, and Sulaimaniya.

1954

A government decree authorizes the cabinet to deport communists, anarchists, and any persons working for foreign governments. A new wave of strikes hits the country. Martial

law is declared in Basra. There is a peasant revolt in the mid-Euphrates area of the country.

1955

Peasant revolt in the province of Diwaniyyah.

1956

After the nationalization of the Suez Canal, Iraq is rocked by a series of strikes and demonstrations against French-British intervention in Egypt. Najaf and Havy are the scenes of a genuine insurrection. Two demonstrators are condemned to death at Havy. The government imposes martial law.

1958

Popular insurrection in the city of Diwaniyyah: forty-three police and many demonstrators are killed during clashes lasting for three hours.

One month later, the July 14 Revolution puts an end to the regime. Members of the Free Officers take over power, denouncing imperialism and proclaiming the foundation of an Iraqi republic. The members of the royal family are executed. Pillage and expropriation are rife. The new regime, in an attempt to stem the revolt, declares a curfew. Power is taken over by Abdul Karim Qasim. His government is supported by the Communist Party and other left-wing organizations. The new regime promises agrarian reform, while the peasants implement their own reform: at Kut and Amara, they ransack the landowners' land, burn down their houses, and destroy land registers and contracts.

1959

The Baathists and the nationalists set up clandestine anticommunist squads employed in assassinating members of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and other radical groups. From 1961 on, some three hundred opponents of the regime are killed in Baghdad and about four hundred in Mosul.

In Mosul, Arab nationalists supported by anticommunist forces try to overthrow the government.

Popular resistance is transformed into class war: the rich are attacked and their houses looted. At Kirkuk, ninety generals, capitalists, and landowners are killed during violent battles (the ICP dissociates itself from the violent demonstrations). Ironically, one year later, several Communist militants are condemned to death as a result of the clashes in Kirkuk. The ICP, advised by Moscow, nevertheless maintains its support for the Iraqi government.

1961

Conflict between the Iraqi government and the Kurds breaks out and continues intermittently right up until 1975. The first year of this conflict sees more than five hundred bombardments in Kurdistan. Kuwait declares its independence, but Iraq claims it to be an Iraqi province.

1963

In February, Qasim is overthrown by a coup d'état, which leads the Baath Party to power for the first time. The new regime proposes the unification of Iraq, Egypt, and Syria. That

same year, the Baathists take over power in Syria, but subsequently the country's two national Baath parties split.

The Baath Party strengthens its ties with the United States, and the CIA lends its support to the party's repression of more than ten thousand people: the bloodbath of that year is to remain in the memories of the Iraqi people forever. In November, the Baath Party is kept out of power by another military coup, and as a result, the military takes over power.

1967

After a split within the Communist Party, a group led by Aziz al-Hajj, heavily influenced by the thoughts of Mao and Che Guevara, moves closer in the direction of armed struggle.

1968

The Baathists return to power in July after yet another coup. From then on, the Baath Party is never to relinquish government power again. The National Guard emerges as the most decisive force in the continuing campaign of political repression. Two demonstrators are killed during a strike in a factory producing vegetable oil near Baghdad, while another three demonstrators are killed during an unauthorized demonstration in celebration of the October Revolution.

1969

The "Guevarist" government led by 'Aziz al-Hajj is defeated, many militants die while being tortured, and 'Aziz al-Hajj repents publicly on television. He subsequently becomes the Iraqi Ambassador to France.

1973

The Iraqi oil industry is nationalized.

1974

After strong Soviet pressure, the ICP joins the (pro-government) National Progressive Front (NPF).

Napalm attacks by the Iraqi government on the Kurdish population of Halabja and Kalalze. The ICP remains a member of the NPF, together with the Baath Party.

1975

Iraq signs an agreement with Iran for the bilateral isolation of the Kurdish nationalist movements, and the same year, the latter suffer both political and military defeat.

1978

Mass arrests of Communist Party militants critical of the regime. Twelve such militants are shot for encouraging political activism among the ranks of the Iraqi army.

1979

Saddam Hussein becomes president of the republic. The ICP is outlawed in April: twenty thousand to thirty thousand people are arrested, and hundreds of Communist militants are either killed or "disappear."

1980

The war between Iraq and Iran starts. Officially, it is the outcome of "historical" territorial claims, but in reality the main problem is that of containing the ongoing Islamic revolution.

1981

The Communist Party opts for armed struggle in the countryside against Saddam Hussein's regime.

1982

Popular antigovernmental insurrection in the Kurdish areas of the country. In the southern Iraqi marshlands, a massive campaign to flush out deserters is launched, involving the use of missiles and heavy artillery. The deserters react by sabotaging the military arsenal in the city of Amara. Those villages that have supported the rebels are razed to the ground and their inhabitants massacred. Iran manages to regain military control of its own land occupied by Iraqi troops and takes the war into Iraqi territory.

1984

The United States restores diplomatic relations with Iraq. Saddam's war efforts are supported not only by the United States, but also by the USSR, France, and Saudi Arabia.

1987

There is an insurrection in the Kurdish city of Halabja in May, led by a group of army deserters. Hundreds of people are killed and the revolt crushed.

1988

Armed deserters take over the city of Sirwan (near Halabja). The Iraq air force destroys the city using missiles and bombs. On March 13, the army attacks Halabja, using chemical

weapons, killing five thousand people. The refugees trying to flee to Iran are halted by Kurdish nationalists.

In August, Iraq and Iran agree on a cease-fire. The first Gulf War is over: eight years of warfare have cost the lives of more than half a million people.

1990

In August, Iraq invades Kuwait.

1991

In January, the British and American armies, supported by a "coalition force," launch Operation Desert Storm, a massive attack on Iraq and Iraqi forces in Kuwait. During the conflict, the allies lose only 131 troops (many of who die from "friendly fire"), compared with 100,000 Iraqi dead.

Though General Norman Schwarzkopf officially declares that retreating Iraqi soldiers will not be attacked, the allies commit horrific massacres of fleeing Iraqi conscripts; along the road joining Kuwait City to Basra, Iraqi troops are the target of what certain American officers call "pigeon shooting."

February and March see an explosion of popular protest against the Iraqi government throughout the country. The revolts begin in the South at Basra and trigger the protests of Northern workers living in the Kurdish areas. Police stations and government buildings are stormed, food stores looted, and food distributed free to the population. At Sulaimaniya in the North, the prisons are stormed. Baath Party cadres are eliminated. In some areas, workers' councils (*shoras*) are set

up, and they begin to govern the towns and cities. They manage to set up their own radio station, first-aid stations, and an armed militia. Baghdad also sees mass desertion; in two areas of the city, Al Sourah and Al Sho'ela, the deserters and their supporters take control.

After a wave of brutal repression in the South, actively supported by the allies, government forces also regain control of the northern parts of the country that were in rebel hands. In April, when the regime regains control of Sulaimaniya, the majority of the population flees into the mountains for fear of punishment by the government forces.

From 1991 to the present day

Sanctions take a massive toll on Iraq's working class and poor. Failure to repair the water supply and sewage systems leads to epidemics of dysentery, typhoid, and cholera. The UN estimates that, by 2001, more than one million people have died as a result of the embargo, half of them children under the age of five.

1992

Revolt in southern Iraq.

1993

Recomposition of the Iraqi extreme Left; foundation of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq.

1994

First episodes of guerrilla warfare in the streets of Baghdad.

1996

The United States launches twenty-seven cruise missiles against Iraq.

1997-98

The regime implements a campaign of "cleansing" the country's prisons. More than two thousand political prisoners are executed.

1998

In February, mobilization of Anglo-American forces in the Gulf appears to point to a new attack on Iraq. UN inspectors intervene to find a compromise solution.

The executions in Iraq's prisons continue: on October 1, 119 Iraqis and 3 Egyptians are shot at Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad. Twenty-nine of them were members of the armed forces, while five were accused of having taken part in the 1991 insurrections. In December, after the withdrawal of the UN inspectors, Clinton launches Operation Desert Fox, with the firing of four hundred cruise missiles and more than six hundred air raids on Iraq. Many people are killed.

1999

In March, the Great Ayatollah Mohammed Sadeq al-Sadr, the most important religious leader in Iraq, is killed, apparently by the Baathist secret police. Revolts in the city of Basra in October are violently crushed by the regime. Other revolts explode in about twenty Iraqi towns and cities, including Baghdad.

Western military attacks continue.

2002

In January, the U.S. president George W. Bush designates Iraq (together with Iran and North Korea) as an "evil" country, therefore a potential American military target. From the summer on, British and U.S. troops begin to gather in Kuwait. Western military attacks on Iraq intensify.

2003

March 20: A bombardment of Baghdad signals the beginning of a new war against Iraq conducted by the United States and Great Britain. The objective is the military occupation of Iraq. This new war begins amid heated international debate and a global antiwar movement of unprecedented proportions.

April 9: Saddam Hussein's regime collapses; U.S. armed forces seize control of Baghdad.

April 21: U.S. general Jay Garner moves to Baghdad and takes over as governor of Iraq under military occupation.

May 1: The United States declares an end to the war against Iraq.

May 12: L. Paul Bremer III, a diplomat, replaces Jay Garner as governor of Iraq.

July 13: A new provisional Iraqi Governing Council is created. This body, set up by L. Paul Bremer, is devoid of any real powers; all major Iraqi anti-Baathist political forces are represented, except for the Worker Communist Party of Iraq and

the Muqtada al-Sadr movement—the largest and most radical “Khomeinist” Shiite force.

August 7–29: Three separate bombs, two against the Jordanian Embassy and the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad and the other against a mosque in Najaf, kill a total of 122 people. Among the victims are Sergio Vieira de Mello, UN Special Envoy in Iraq, and Ayahollah Muhammad Bakir al-Hakim, head of the Supreme Council for Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

October 27: A bomb explodes at the Red Cross headquarters in Baghdad, killing thirty people; no one had claimed responsibility at the time of this writing.

2004

January 1–December 31: Following armed actions and attacks against the occupation forces. More than 1,300 U.S. soldiers have been killed, as well as more than 100 soldiers from other foreign armies and thousands of Iraqi police operating under U.S. control. Dozens of different forces, across the whole of the political spectrum—indeed sometimes at the opposite ends of the political spectrum—have claimed responsibility for some of these actions. Around 130,000 mostly U.S. troops are currently stationed on Iraqi soil, as well as approximately 20,000 soldiers of “coalition” member countries. From May 1, 2003, to date, Iraq has seen a wave of demonstrations and protests by the unemployed, by women, by the Shiite community, and by the residents of the poorest parts of all Iraqi cities. Hundreds of thousands of people are demanding

better living conditions, democratic rights, and an end to military occupation.

Appendix

Speeches and Statements of the Iraqi Left

Appendix

Speeches and Statements of the President

APPENDIX A

Seventh Congress of the Comintern: Speech by Qasim Hasan (Nazim), the Iraqi delegate

Introduction by Muhammad Abu Nasr, Free Arab Voice

Co-editor

The last Comintern Congress was held in 1935 and it was the first one with any major Arab participation.

One Lebanese, evidently Fu'ad al-Shimali, did take part in the Sixth Congress of the Comintern in 1928 representing the Syrian Communist Party (which included Lebanon). The only thing in the Comintern Archives pertaining to Syrian participation, however, was a report on the activity of the Syrian CP between the Fifth and Sixth Congresses, which was published at the time in a book that compiled similar documents from parties all over the world. Otherwise all that remains is one barely readable (unreadable in places) handwritten letter in French signed "Hussein" (possibly a party pseudonym for al-Shimali) but it seemed to be on peripheral issues related to his own status as a delegate.

The big wave of "Arabization" in the "Arab" CPs took place

in the early 1930s, and was forced by Moscow on the minority leaderships of those parties. As a result, the first (and last) Comintern Congress with any real Arab presence was the Seventh that took place in the summer of 1935.

[...]

An interesting feature of this speech is that it opens with several paragraphs devoted to criticism of a talk by "Comrade Ferdi." "Comrade Ferdi" apparently was the pseudonym of Sefik Husnu Degmer (b. 1890), a Communist from Turkey. The Comintern archives contain a press photo of "Ferdi" seated on stage with the top Comintern leaders, at least at one point in the proceedings, so he was presumably a person of some importance in the Comintern.

"Ferdi" delivered a long speech in French on 31 July 1935 in which he not only discussed the situation in Turkey but also talked about the situation in the neighboring Arab countries to the south.

In reply, several Arab delegates began their respective speeches with criticisms of Ferdi. Ridwan al-Hilw in this speech calls attention to "mistakes" made by Ferdi in a rather general way. In the second speech below, that of the Iraqi delegate, Qasim Hasan (pseud. "Nazim"), we find an eloquent and specific criticism of several points made by the Turkish Communist delegate.

This exchange is in itself interesting just for being there. Standard historians are unaware of any differences of opinion or any debates at all at this very Stalinist Seventh Comintern Congress, and indeed there was much less free discussion in

1935 than there had been in the early Congresses in Lenin's time. Nevertheless as we see from these speeches, the Arab delegates, at least, kept some sort of debate alive.

Below the address by Ridwan al-Hilw is the full text of the speech and the declaration by the Iraqi delegate to the Comintern, Qasim Hasan, pseudonym "Nazim," which he delivered on 1 August 1935. Hasan attended the Congress as a non-voting delegate because the Iraqi Communist Party apparently obtained accreditation to the Comintern only at that Seventh Congress. Hasan's speech contains a very interesting review of the anti-colonial struggle waged by the Iraqi people between the First World War and 1935.

One note on the speech by Nazim. This is a transcription of the original English text from the Comintern Archives. It retains, therefore, all the spelling and usage of the original. The word "shaykh," for example is spelled "sheik," in keeping with common English usage of the 1930s and the word "Arabian" is consistently used where modern usage requires "Arab" or "Arabic." (In modern usage, "Arabian" is an adjectival form for "Arabia" and therefore refers strictly to the Arabian Peninsula only; "Arab" refers to Arabic speaking people and their culture, etc., wherever they might be.)

Information from Qasim Hasan's personal questionnaire from the Congress is as follows: He was born in 1910, was of Arab nationality, he listed his class background as "petty-bourgeois, intellectual." He listed his educational level as "incomplete higher education," and said he'd worked for three years as a journalist. At the time of the Congress he had

spent four months in prison for political activities in Iraq. As to the languages he spoke, he replied, "Arabic, English, and a little Persian."

Hanna Batatu in his book *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* refers several times to the career of Qasim Hasan. A founder of the Iraqi CP, he was a friend and law school classmate of Yunus as-Sab'awi. He and Sab'awi worked together with Fu'ad Nassar (later of the Jordanian CP) at smuggling arms into Palestine. (Batatu, p. 457-58). Batatu says (p. 460) that Khalid Bekdash met Hasan at the Seventh Comintern Congress and found Hasan to be "too fond of luxury." Zaki Khayri also seems to have developed a negative opinion of Qasim Hasan.

In the Iraqi police files that Batatu used in his research, he found a Communist Party notice from December 1935 saying that Qasim Hasan "was a traitor and a spy" ready to betray revolutionaries to the police. Yet the police files that Batatu used indicate that the police didn't trust Hasan either. It is likely that Hasan fell prey to some sort of internal struggle within the Iraqi CP, possibly sparked by Khalid Bekdash's views, because despite that notice in the police files, Hasan remained a part of the Communist movement through the Rashid Ali al-Gailani revolt in 1941, a strange fact if the Iraqi Communist Party really did think he was a traitor and spy.

When the Rashid Ali al-Gailani uprising was suppressed, Hasan traveled to Moscow and stayed in the USSR until 1944 when he returned to Iraq. After 1958 Abdul Karim Qasim named him ambassador to India and later to Czechoslovakia.

By that time, however, he seems to have drifted away from the Communist movement.

But wherever life was to lead Qasim Hasan later on, this document should be read as a reflection of the struggles and thinking of Iraqi Communists in the summer of 1935.

Speech by Qasim Hasan (Nazim), the Iraqi Delegate

Delivered on the morning of August 1, 1935 (8th day of the Congress). Translated from the French by Kevin Walsh. Stenogramme with authors' corrections of the 13th session of the Seventh Congress of the Comintern: Continuation of the discussion on the report by Pieck "On the Activity of the Executive Committee of the Communist International" and of Angaretis "On the Activity of the International Control Commission."

British imperialism has replaced the direct mandate system of governing Iraq by the treaty of 1930, and has thereby organised an "independent" state. Before the ruling class of Iraq received its so-called "independence" and a seat in the League of Nations, it had to agree to all the demands of British imperialism. Thereby the latter not only did not weaken but on the contrary fundamentally strengthened its position of colonial rule in Iraq. This is but natural, inasmuch as Iraq possesses great military and strategic importance in the system of British imperialism, first of all as a fortified outpost of British imperialism against the Near East colonial possessions and as a military base against the USSR. Therefore British imperialism, despite the "treaty" with the ruling classes of Iraq, has re-

tained in its hands all the points of military importance in the country: the railway and airway lines, the maritime bases in the Persian Gulf, the newly built airports, primarily to block the road to India, has built paved highways to the northern border of Iraq and has kept entirely intact its economic and political domination.

By consolidating its military and strategic base in Iraq, British imperialism has in view primarily the creation of a *place d'armes* for a counter-revolutionary attack on the USSR. With this end in view three great airports were built—one in Huneidi near Baghdad, one in Shueubie near Basri and one in Sin-Ummu-Duban near Ramadi. To the same end the railroads and highways are being built. Of course, you understand quite well that these measures by British imperialism are directed likewise towards inflicting merciless punishment upon and suppressing the powerful rising national liberation movement in Iraq. The British Intelligence Service has its representatives literally in every corner of the country. One of the usual methods of "work" by these agents of the British Intelligence Service is to cause constant clashes between tribes and among the various religious sects, which in this way aim to achieve a split and thus weaken the national front of struggle against British imperialism.

British imperialism has set up in Iraq a national army which has 17,000 bayonets and now the government has introduced a Bill providing for compulsory mobilisation. The national army is likewise supplied with military aeroplanes. Besides, there are 5,000 members on the police force. On the

army alone the government spends about 55% of its entire budget, while for health protection it spends 3% of its budget. And this in a country where the vast majority of the population suffers from tropical and social diseases. If we take into account also the fact that immense sums are being spent on the constantly swelling apparatus of the colonial government, one can imagine what tremendous additional burden is thrust upon the masses of the people. Direct and indirect taxes are growing constantly while the arbitrary actions and the plundering policy of the government carried out by the officials creates an increasingly intolerable situation for the toilers. Despite the fact that the possessing class of town and country enjoys great privileges and is almost exempt from taxes, not to speak of foreign firms which are placed in extremely privileged positions, the government is levying new taxes upon the toilers and is passing legislation which will finally enslave them.

The toilers of Iraq see in their government the machinery of British imperialism which squeezes the last drop out of them and this is called the "government of an independent Arabian country." At the same time all the big officials and cabinet ministers have seized immense stretches of the best lands in Iraq, paying trifling taxes at the same time, or being entirely exempt from taxes. To this must be added that the local feudal lords enjoy almost unlimited sway over the peasants, while the merchants and usurers draw the last farthing from the peasantry without mercy and with great arbitrariness. The prisons of "independent" Iraq are overcrowded with peasants who

were unable to pay their taxes or their debts. For this reason the government in its "solicitude" for the toilers has built new capacious prisons in Mosul, Basra and Baghdad. The legislative organs work intensively for the purpose of allowing the landlords and the banks to seize and expropriate the land and the property of the peasantry.

Most of the peasants in Iraq have been deprived of their land and in part also of their implements of production and therefore they are like slaves at the mercy of the landlords, sheikhs and usurers. The Iraq peasants with their whole families and cattle, should he have such, are housed in earthen huts or at best in wooden shacks. The sufferings of the peasantry are increased by the tropical and social diseases which prevail among the vast majority, especially in the South where 90% of the peasant population have no medical aid while being afflicted with syphilis, malaria, trachoma; they live in abject poverty and squalor, work day and night, at that the whole family works, especially the women who do the heaviest work. Hence, the great mortality among the peasant women. The Iraq peasants with all their intense labour have an annual income of about 1-3...Iraqi pounds. Each of these peasants must pay 40 percent of the harvest to his feudal lord or sheik, and in addition 40 percent in taxes so that he is left 20 percent with which to feed his family. Besides the peasant, his family and children must also pay the inherited debts. The life of the Fellaḥ masses in "independent" Iraq is very cheap. It is cheaper than the life of a sick dog of a British official for which special hospitals are prepared in Baghdad at the expense of the Min-

istry of Public Health of Iraq.

The working class of Iraq is in the same difficult situation as the peasantry. Their wages, their living standards are constantly on the downgrade and therefore the young worker who is cruelly exploited ages rapidly and dies an early death. There is no law in the country to cure even in the slightest degree the unlimited arbitrary conduct and cruel exploitation of the bourgeoisie and capitalists. In Iraq there is no labour protection: a worker may be thrown upon the street at any time if his boss so desires, in which event his whole family is doomed to perish. There is no limit to the working time. The average working day lasts from 12 to 16 hours, and in most of the workshops, workers get no free day even on religious holidays. The law prohibits labour organisations of every description as well as meetings of workers. There are 5,700 workers employed by the Iraq railways. In some of the industries and ports about 9,000 workers are employed while a great many workers are engaged in the building industry. Others find employment in small shops packing dates, in dry-goods stores, small factories, in irrigation, agriculture, tobacco growing, cotton plantations and textile mills.

All these groups of unorganised Iraq workers are extremely poor and subject to all kinds of feudal taxes, are in bondage to the shop owners for the debts they owe them as well as to the house owners and employers. They have no civil rights, not even simple human rights. In Iraq there are about 15,000 chauffeurs and repair garage workers. These workers are likewise badly exploited and lead a miserable life because

of the persecutions of the police who constantly fine them and impose all kinds of taxes upon them. In 1934 the chauffeurs of Baghdad declared a strike and forced the government to make concessions despite the repression and police persecution. In this strike the Communists took an active organisational part. It is to be regretted that the experience of the strike movement was not properly utilised and consolidated because of the weakness and even utter lack of a trade union movement in Iraq.

Despite the furious terror and police provocation, during the last few years, there has been a development and rise in the revolutionary national liberation movement. As early as 1920 the broad masses of the people of Iraq under the direct influence of the great October Socialist revolution and in reply to the attack of British imperialism rose in a heroic insurrection. This insurrection was stamped out in blood. During the entire succeeding period there was no let-up in the armed peasant uprisings and the national liberation movement of the Kurdish people. Especially is it necessary to note the heroic struggle of the whole Iraq people against British imperialism and the central government which found expression in the uprisings in Souk al Shuyok, Rometha and Suleiman in 1925, 1927, 1931 and 1933. The uprisings in Barzan, 1932, and in Soukal Shayook, 1929, bore an anti-imperialist, anti-government and partly anti-feudal character. In the cities there was no end to the disturbances in which the working class took the most active part, sometimes forming independent demonstrations and strikes. In 1931 there occurred the strike of the

railroad workers, in 1933 there was a general strike of chauffeurs, while in 1932 the mass movement grew into a general strike of the urban petty bourgeoisie during which for 17 days stores and workshops were closed, and for 3 months the Belgian electric company was boycotted, in which campaign the Communists took an active part. Despite the furious terror and police provocations of the British imperialists jointly with the Iraq feudal lords, the last few years have witnessed a development and upsurge of the revolutionary national liberation movement.

Now I want to dwell somewhat on the last mighty anti-imperialist and anti-government uprising in the South of Iraq in the province of Muntafique and Divania. This uprising of 1935 has lasted six months, continues to this day and passed through three periods of development. In substance it consists of three independent and consecutive uprisings. In the first period the uprising took place in the regions around Nejef and Kerbela and Hindya under the slogans of a religious and civil democracy. It transpired under the leadership of tribal sheikhs, whose aim it was to utilise the discontent of the masses of the people in their own reactionary interests. However, even this uprising had as its base an anti-imperialist and anti-government character and contained within itself the seeds of an agrarian anti-feudal struggle, as a result of which the sheikhs were compelled to advance a number of peasant, democratic demands. The imperialists conducted provocative work among the tribes and in the press and strove to attribute to this movement the character of tribal and religious discord.

This uprising was suppressed almost without bloodshed, as a result of the sheikhs' going over quite openly to the side of the government and accepting posts which the government offered them in the form of concessions.

Our party took an active part in this uprising, and carried on propaganda in town and country, distributing leaflets in the name of the United Anti-Imperialist Committee, popularising the agrarian and labour demands as well as the demands of the broad masses of urban petty bourgeoisie. The Communist Party succeeded in distributing these leaflets upon eight occasions. (While all prisoners have been set free thanks to the amnesty which was proclaimed at that period), the Communists who fell into the hands of the police at the time of the uprising remain in prison to this day.

The next phase of the uprising flared up in Divania a few weeks after the first period came to a close. It launched anti-imperialist and anti-government slogans and attracted middle and petty strata of sheikhs. Even this uprising was declared beyond the law. The sheikhs of the neighbouring regions, frightened by the growth of this movement, hastened to capitulate to the government; the latter sent into the region of the uprising its river flotilla, artillery and aviation and with their help succeeded in wiping out almost every village in the region. Thousands of imprisoned peasants have been court-martialled on the spot, and, as was the case in Rumeina and Divania, Nasrie, hanged on the spot.

During the third period the uprising embraced the region of Souk al Shuyok and bore a definitely mature character of

peasant class struggle. The peasants of this region came out independently with slogans of removing British troops from the soil of Iraq, destroying aerodromes, for a democratic national government, for a reduction of taxes, for a division of state lands among the peasants, for wiping out of debts, etc.

In other words, they accepted all the basic demands which we put forth in our leaflets. The insurgents succeeded in ousting all sheikhs from the regions; they broke prisons and made short shrift of the police. As a measure of self-defence they opened the sluices and released the water, thereby stopping the river transport; they captured 18 machine guns, 600 rifles and one cannon. A section of the national army, which was sent as a punitive expedition against the insurgents went over to their side. The insurgents went into battle with Communist leaflets in their hands and when captured and brought before the court martial showed the judges our handbills and said: "Everything is written here." The government and the imperialists brought all kinds of arms which they had at their disposal into the region of the uprising, but even that measure helped them only to localise the uprising and keep it from spreading to the remaining regions.

This uprising, as a mass peasant movement, is of enormous significance for all countries of the Near East and in particular for the development of the national liberation and agrarian movement in Iraq. It laid bare the vast social upheavals which took place in the ranks of the peasantry of Iraq and that revolutionary might which it represents. This uprising was also a serious gap for our Communist Party, revealing

at the same time the vast possibilities which we have for Communist work among the Iraq masses. In the course of this short period our Party increased tenfold, not counting the considerable numbers of sympathisers who rally around the Party. The sympathies of the toiling masses of Iraq are on the side of this uprising, which, while inflicting a slap to the puppet Iraq government, at the same time shook the ground under the feet of British imperialism in that country. Considerable masses of toilers in all Arabian countries are still following the national reformists; still we succeeded in this uprising in exposing the role of the national reformist government and their policy of blocs with the imperialists.

In spite of the mistake which we committed and which consisted particularly in our weak work of attracting workers of Iraq to join the uprising in such a very short time of the age of our Party, still we can state, even on the basis of an incomplete study of the experience of the battles in Iraq, that we achieved unquestionable successes. We want to utilise this occasion in order to say to the toilers of all Arabian countries that they can gain true independence only through decisive struggle and through the organising of the broadest national masses for armed fight against imperialism and its agency. Only this armed battle can bring the masses to a struggle for a workers' and peasants' government and for their power in the form of Soviets, as against the puppet national reformist government which helps the imperialists in realising their colonial policy.

Declaration.

I am compelled to make a declaration before the Congress in order to refute the incorrect facts with regard to Iraq, which Comrade Ferdi, as delegate to the Congress, reported apparently in his own name.

1. It was alleged that the masses of the people in Iraq under the cloak of the national government, do not directly feel the oppression of British imperialism. This is incorrect. Iraq is a colony of British imperialism and the masses of the people feel the direct power of British arms. A regime of occupation prevails in the country in the true sense of the word. Before Iraq was accepted in the League of Nations, British imperialism thoroughly consolidated its colonial positions in the country, and in the first place its military positions, which are directed against the masses of the people and against the USSR. This is what must be understood. The oppression of British imperialism is giving rise to a powerful anti-imperialist movement. Terror reigns in the country.

2. It was alleged that there is no clearly defined national-liberation movement in Iraq. It is not true. Our people know the glorious anti-imperialist revolution of 1920, when the peasants fought under the slogan "Out with the British from the country, to the last soldiers!" That revolution was suppressed in a sea of blood of the toiling people and in direct battles with the British troops. The British were compelled to resort to manoeuvres and to proclaim Faisal King of Iraq. The latter is relying on the feudal class of the country and upon the com-

pradores. For 15 years peasant insurrections all over the country against British imperialism and its puppet—the central government—do not cease to take place, although they were suppressed exclusively with British bombs and tanks to the treachery of the feudals. The most recent uprising in 1935 is already nearing its sixth month. The peasants advanced all the slogans of the Communist Party of Iraq. The uprising is of a real anti-imperialist and anti-feudal character. In the course of this uprising our Young Communist Party, in spite of its shortcomings, passed a real test of which I had the honour to report to the Congress. It is not without reason that the Ministry of Iraq has earmarked £40,000 sterling as a special budget appropriation to combat the Communist movement in the country. These facts ought to be known. A powerful national liberation movement exists in Iraq, and the Communist Party of Iraq will be able to fulfil its duty as organiser of this movement and, under the leadership of the Comintern and the hegemony of the working class, will lead the movement to its victorious conclusion.

APPENDIX B

Statement of the ICP-Central Committee, July 24-25, 2003

...The Iraqi people have enthusiastically welcomed the end of Saddam Hussein's brutal dictatorship. Nonetheless, the joy was marred for weeks by fear of reverting to the old system, as history has taught people to be cautious and suspicious of both Saddam Hussein and his regime, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other. Caution and worry persist to this day, especially that the desired democratic alternative has not emerged. Moreover, the ensuing political vacuum and lack of security remain major concerns, causing enormous suffering for the people, and a top priority that requires dedicated attention.

The most appropriate approach to overcoming the crisis which emerged after the collapse of dictatorship is to press for the formation of a transitory Iraqi government representing all sectors of society and having real powers. This would evolve from the convening of a national conference that includes the full political, ethnic, religious spectrum of the Iraqi people. Only in this manner can a government be able to resolve the

numerous difficult and urgent tasks facing the country, which include, amongst other things, preparing a draft constitution, the institution of an electoral system and undertaking dialogue with the U.S. in order to put an end to the occupation....

...The current Governing Council has, without a doubt, limited powers and does not amount to the much-desired transitional national government. However, the U.S. acceptance of our people's demand for instituting a council possessing real powers is an indication of the potential for the Governing Council to attain more such powers during its future work and natural struggle with the "Coalition Provisional Authority." The fact that the Governing Council would be "an arena of struggle" more than being a final and constant fixed formula was among the principal reasons for our call during recent weeks to convene an urgent meeting for Iraqi political parties and forces to discuss the general situation in the country: political tension, deteriorating services and worsening living standards, and the means towards ending all this and restore confidence and hope amongst the Iraqi people.

The CC [Central Committee] of the ICP had, in taking its decision to join the Governing Council, considered the fact that all other political parties and national and religious groupings in the country wished to join it, even some of those that were excluded. Furthermore, the CC also took into consideration the general desire which is perceived among party organizations, friends and supporters, that it should adopt a positive stance in the current sensitive and complex stage which our country is going through, and not to give any pretext to those

who want to ostracize and even persecute it once again.

However, it must be stated that participation in the Governing Council in its existing format does not represent an alternative to establishing a transitional national government. The latter remains our goal. The Council being a compromise should represent a step towards establishing an independent national Iraqi government, and take it on the road to formulating a patriotic, democratic program that would help the country transcend the current situation into forming a unified democratic federal Iraq....

...Concerning our attitude to occupation: The UN Charter guarantees the right of peoples under occupation to resist it. Thus the Iraqi people, who are under the occupation authority according to the UNSC resolution No. 1483, have the legitimate right to exercise various forms of struggle to speedily end the occupation and restore national sovereignty. However, contrary to the claims in some media, resistance to occupation is not solely through violent means, but also includes various other forms of peaceful political struggle. History teaches us that people have to resort to armed struggle only after all other peaceful means have been exhausted.

Various options and possibilities are available today for our people to exercise peaceful political struggle. Dozens of parties, political, trade union and occupational organizations, as well as other institutions of what is called civil society have come into being. Thus under the available freedoms, nearly all patriotic forces of all shades of color, including our party, consider that violent means are not the most appropriate as long

as the peaceful means have not been exhausted.

Furthermore, armed operations, within the prevailing condition in our country, can cause damage to the aspired aim of ending the occupation as soon as possible. On the contrary, such operations provide a pretext for the occupation forces to prolong their presence in our country. Moreover, these operations prolong the atmosphere of tension, worry, and fear among our people. They also cause damage to the efforts to prepare the conditions for negotiation with the occupation authority to put an end to the occupation and draw up a timetable for the withdrawal of the occupation forces.

It is legitimate to ask what has sabotage to do with resistance when it directly targets electricity, gas and oil networks as well as other public services, thus adding further hardship to the appalling living conditions of millions of Iraqis. Such armed operations are also exploited by the remnants of the collapsed regime as they dream to return to power. However, it is not unexpected, on the other hand, that abuse of power and violent excesses by the occupation forces only produce violent reactions taking the form of armed operations. It is necessary to differentiate between groups and forces conducting armed operations, and at the same time it would be a grave mistake to believe that counter violence and repression by themselves could put an end to these operations. The way to tackle this problem lies first and foremost in the preparation of requirements for the speedy handing of power to Iraqis themselves and for building a democratic system in the country....

...Before concluding the meeting, the Central Committee

discussed the tasks currently facing our party, the other patriotic and democratic parties and forces as well as the Iraqi people in general. These tasks are the following in brief:

Ensuring security and stability, and restoring normal conditions in the country,

Eliminating the remnants of the ousted regime,

Addressing the urgent problems that concern living conditions: of wages and salaries, return of employees to their jobs, distribution of food rations, restoration of public and municipal services,

Preparing the prerequisites for free and fair elections under UN supervision,

Preparing a draft constitution to be put for a public plebiscite,

Then to undertake discussions with the USA and UK to put an end to the occupation....

APPENDIX C

Statement of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq, September 2003

The Issue of the State in Iraq

The collapse of the Baath regime as the result of the U.S. war on Iraq has created a governmental vacuum in Iraq. No political force in Iraq has been able so far to fill this vacuum and present itself as an alternative to the Baath government and undertake the task of administering Iraqi society.

The U.S. war on Iraq and ethnocentric, religious, and tribal forces have brought a grim and dreadful scenario to Iraqi society. The governmental vacuum amid the disintegration of the society's structure and the total collapse of pillars of civil life has led to enormous social chaos and monumental pressure on the Iraqi people.

The current situation has created an urgent and vital issue to resolve the problem of the governmental vacuum in Iraqi society as a main channel to solve its difficulties. The U.S. civil administration and their handpicked Governing Council made up of religious, ethnocentric, and tribal groups not only lack le-

gitimacy but also have failed to address the monumental problems faced by the Iraqi people. This failure has paved the way for the mafia gangs to interfere in the affairs and daily lives of Iraqi citizens and violate their rights.

The Worker Communist Party of Iraq emphasizes that the coming government in Iraq must be decided by the masses and based on the direct rule of the people. The U.S. civil administration in Iraq and the Governing Council are not only against the interests of the masses but also lack legitimacy. Therefore, they must be removed from power and replaced by a government run by the masses and based on their direct involvement.

In order to answer the issue of the governmental vacuum, solve Iraq's problems, and achieve a prosperous and free future for the Iraqi people, the Worker Communist Party of Iraq strives to seize power and build a government based on the will of the masses and rule of councils. Thus, it struggles to build a socialist republic in Iraq.

APPENDIX D

Statement of the Worker Communist Party of Iraq—Political Bureau, September 26, 2003

The Military Resistance Against the U.S. Forces in Iraq

After twelve years of the antihuman policy of the economic sanctions and disastrous wars against the people of Iraq, the U.S. government has occupied Iraq and imposed its military authority on Iraqi society. Apart from large numbers of casualties and widespread destruction, the U.S. war and occupation has placed Iraqi society on the verge of a very grim and dreadful scenario. Lack of security, hunger, deprivation, and increasingly oppressive conditions is the situation of millions of people. The most basic rights of the masses are under attack and the society faces a lethal political uncertainty, confusion, and chaos.

Facing this situation, millions of people in Iraq are showing growing discontent and protest and demanding that the United States and its allied forces leave Iraq. Various political forces are striving to capitalize on this protest to achieve their own political objectives.

On the other hand, the latest war that the U.S. government launched against Iraq has resulted in the overthrow of the Baath regime. This war is still continuing. The resistance by the remnants of the Baath regime, nationalist, and Islamic groups is a part of this war. However, this war and those who are waging it not only have nothing to do with the rights and future of the Iraqi people, but they are completely against the interests of the masses. To achieve their own reactionary objectives, these groups victimize people and sacrifice the basis of life in the society. They attempt to win the support of the people by deception and promoting Arab nationalism and Islamic sentiments among people under the pretext of "fighting the occupiers" and conducting military operations against the occupying forces. In order to put pressure on the United States, these groups resort to disrupting and exploding social services and the society's infrastructure....

Because of its bloody oppression, mass killing, and fascist policies against the people in Iraq for over 35 years, the Baath party must be dismantled and must not have any role in Iraqi society and the political future of Iraq. The current activities and military operations against the U.S. forces are hopeless reactionary attempts to return to power against the interests of the people. Also, the Islamic groups, under the pretext of organizing a military movement to oust the U.S. forces, are attempting to exploit the peoples' just struggle and demands to impose their own reactionary and oppressive rule.

Thus, they too are taking part in deepening the lack of security, reaction, and the grim and dreadful scenario that is

unfolding in Iraq. In this conflict, the remnants of the Baath regime and the Islamic groups resort to blowing up civil targets and attacking the sources of people's livelihood. The Worker Communist Party struggles to defeat these reactionary forces and thwart their role. It also strongly condemns attacks on social services. The current disastrous situation in Iraq and the current war and conflicts are the direct result of the U.S. war and occupation of Iraq. Therefore, ending this reactionary scenario relies on the withdrawal of the United States and its allied troops from Iraq.

The Worker Communist Party strongly insists on withdrawal of these forces and building a regime based on the will of the masses.

The Worker Communist Party, with all its force, struggles to achieve this demand. It believes that political and mass struggle is the suitable form of struggle during the current situation in Iraq because it can help organize millions of people and bring them to the forefront.

The Worker Communist Party struggles to organize the masses and develop their protests in the form of a massive political movement all over Iraq and struggles to oust the United States and its allied forces and build the masses' own regime in Iraq. It calls on the masses to organize around this alternative, to strengthen the movement to remove the U.S. forces and build the masses' own regime and to eradicate the fascist Baath party and the Islamic groups and marginalize them.

APPENDIX E

Statement from Sulaimaniya Shora (Workers' Council), June 23, 1991

Workers—Exploited, Honored Revolutionary People

The brutal Baathist capitalist regime for more than twenty-two years has continued to crush, destroy, and kill individuals, groups, and our sons in order to stabilize its dark authority. In a very barbaric way it attacked the revolutionary people of this country.

No day went by without the regime arresting hundreds and thousands of workers—exploited and revolutionary people who then disappeared. Also it attacked and destroyed most of the proud and revolutionary areas that opposed the regime. Under the regime in this critical and desperate era, constant starvation, unemployment, and high prices had pushed most people into this forlornly unhappy situation.

The capitalist-oriented parasitical minority has got all the methods, most of the institutions, and everything else in their hands whilst we, the majority have been denied every human right.

This decadent capitalistic regime with its naked brutal dictatorship has made us, the workers and exploited, into cannon fodder for two big destructive wars (Iran vs. Iraq and the United States Alliance in Kuwait). Up to now we and our sons have been eaten by the desert vultures in both wars. Many of us disappeared or we live very precariously. The hatred of this always-disadvantaged people—everywhere exploited in the cities and small towns—has destroyed the regime's institutions though their own force alone. So much so that they nearly sounded the death knell for the regime, which even until now has not been able to put itself back together again. It was the realization of the oppressed's own power, independent, relying only on themselves, and in no way dependent on the might of imperialism and the bourgeois nationalists of the Kurdistan Front. In Kurdistan, the KF were trying to control the power of the people and nowhere, not just in Iraq, are the intents of World Imperialism, particularly America, served by revolutionary people. Today it's always trying to crush the uprising of the workers and exploited people in any part of the world and replace it with rulers and/or capitalist states that serve their interests. Just look at how we saw the shame of the beaten Iraqi army and how, with its power broken, it was then encouraged by the Imperialists to crush the uprising. They gave up on the destruction of the regime because they needed this defeated army for another time.

It was due to both the philosophical attitude of the bourgeois nationalists, which didn't enjoy the backing of Imperialism as well as the lack of a workers' Communist Party

representing the vanguard of different sectors of the workers' movement that the uprising couldn't continue and which stopped us in our tracks. (This was the weakest point of the revolutionary workers' movement at the time of the uprising.) The Kurdish people became the victim; migrating and starving in their thousands in the cold where they contracted diseases and many died. But even despite these adversities, in this period of bourgeois nationalist negotiations with the regime, the workers and exploited have continued with their uprising and are ever ready to confront the forces of fear and trickery.

The bourgeois nationalists, after justifying the migration of revolutionary Kurdish people because of the Imperialists' betrayal, are now themselves in negotiations with the regime seeking a solution to the Kurdish problem in this way. But the workers and exploited revolutionary people continuing with their uprising in Sulaimaniya are proving that they will never accept the negotiating conditions. And in Hawler [Arbil], on the Tuesday before Eid [a Muslim religious festival], the workers and exploited through their sympathy actions proved their solidarity with the people of the South and the rest of Iraq. It won't let the colors of their own struggle fade!

The workers and exploited assent to negotiations for one reason only—that the reuniting power of the people obliged the regime to come to the negotiating table clearing the way toward the destruction of the regime and the Kurdish people should have all the power in their hands.

The people of Kurdistan only assent to the negotiations

in order to stipulate that there must be democracy and political freedom now in Kurdistan and all Iraq. That no one should be tortured and one should be free to choose any politics or beliefs.

Moreover, the workers and exploited only condone the negotiations so that, on the one hand, a framework can be recognized so that there shouldn't be anybody above them speaking on their behalf. On the other hand, we, the millions of workers standing in line, do not sanction the negotiations as a means of consolidating authority (every day the regime strengthens the institutions and the army, soldiers patrolling the street, armored vehicles, etc., have increased and there is no corner in Kurdistan without their presence).

We also cannot sanction these negotiations while democracy and free expression is forbidden and the workers and exploited cannot be free in their homes to discuss their demands and needs. What's the ground for negotiations and what do they mean if the regime continues with the same policy?

And what do negotiations mean if or when the Kurdistan Front starts openly attacking the voice of freedom and democracy setting about the shora workers' councils and their committees or anyone outside the Kurdistan Front? We, the workers and exploited, have as an immediate task to organize our general meetings and assemblies, to discuss our differences and to put forward our demands asking for an explanation for the ongoing negotiations and to put pressure on both sides not to keep us waiting. In short, to rise up for our demands. Firstly, all the invaders' army and powers should be

ousted completely from Kurdistan. Secondly, complete freedom for all political prisoners and freedom for the Anfal and Bartani area prisoners. Thirdly, unconditional political freedom. Fourthly, a vote on whether to agree/disagree with the negotiations. All this is to be established by the workers and people themselves.

VICTORY TO THE POPULAR WORKERS' UPRISING.

DOWN WITH CAPITALISM. LONG LIVE SOCIALISM.

Committee for Workers in Small Factories in Sulaimaniya

June 23, 1991

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The author and the publisher are deeply indebted to Hanna Batatu, whose book *The Old Social Classes and the Revolutionary Movements of Iraq* was vital to the preparation of the present volume.

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It was August Spies, one of the Martyrs who was targeted for being an immigrant and an anarchist, who predicted the battles being fought to this day. "If you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement," Spies told the judge, "then hang us. Here you will tread upon a spark, but here, and there, and behind you, and in front of you, and everywhere, the flames will blaze up. It is a subterranean fire. You cannot put it out. The ground is on fire upon which you stand."

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THIS IMPORTANT book offers a critical analysis of the Iraqi Communist Party and its contribution to the workers' movement and the Left in Iraq.

WHETHER STANDING up to British occupiers, the monarchy they installed, or the brutal dictatorship of Saddam Hussein who for many years was a friend and ally of the United States Iraqis have a rich history that has been entirely ignored by the media and pundits who supported the most recent invasion and occupation of that country.

THE IRAQI Communist Party has played a contradictory role in that struggle one that cannot be ignored and which has valuable lessons for the future of Iraq.

"Sooner or later, all foreign troops will have to leave Iraq. If they do not do so voluntarily, they will be driven out. Their continuing presence is a spur to violence. When Iraq's people regain control of their own destiny they will decide the internal structures and the external policies of their country.

"One can hope that this will combine democracy and social justice, a formula that has set Latin America alight in recent years, but is greatly resented by the Empire. Meanwhile, Iraqis have one thing of which they can be proud and of which British and U.S. citizens should be envious: an opposition."

—from the Foreword by **TARIQ ALI**

"This book sheds light on the 'other Iraq,' that of the working classes and their struggles, an Iraq that was completely ignored by the media and by the left wing during the dramatic days of preparations for war by the U.S.-British coalition. The present volume attempts to reconstruct the history of the Iraqi Communist Party and the Iraqi workers' movement, an essential part of the country's past that remains largely unknown.

"The struggle for the liberation of Iraq does not lie with the United States. It lies in the Basra oil refineries, where workers are striking against the Baathist management of the plant, restored to their positions by the British forces...Among the women who are fighting for equality and freedom, and courageously battling against diverse reactionary Islamic forces. Among the workers currently discussing...their struggle for a better life in Iraq."

—From *A People's History of Iraq*

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